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**EXPLORING ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT
OF POWER AND CORRUPTION: A CULTURAL HISTORICAL
ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT IN PAKISTAN**

MUHAMMAD BABUR

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Exploring Organisation learning in the context of power and corruption: A cultural historical analysis of public sector management in Pakistan

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Exploring Organizational Learning in the Context of Power and Corruption: A Cultural Historical Analysis of Public Sector Management in Pakistan

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DEDICATION

*Whatever I am
today,*

I am because of

My Mother –

Her contribution

To my life

*To my personal and
professional growth*

*To my values,
beliefs and abilities*

*It cannot be
expressed in words*

I dedicate this dissertation to my Mother

– My source of Inspiration!

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACR	Annual Confidential Report
ADO/ADEO	Assistant District Officer/ Assistant District Education Officer
ANTRIEP	Asian Network of Training and Research Institutions in Educational Planning
AT	Activity Theory
BoC	Bureau of Curriculum
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
DCs	District Coordinators
DDO/DDEOs	Deputy District Officer/ Deputy District Education Officers
DEOs	District Education Offices/ Officers
DHM	Deputy Head Master/ Mistress
DO	District Officer
DoE	Department of Education
DSAs	District School Authorities
EDO	Executive District Officer
EFA	Education for All
ESRA	Education Sector Reforms Assistance
FAQs	Frequently Asked Questions
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FUSs	Frequently Used Statements
GCI	Global Competitiveness Index
HM/ HT	Head Master/ Head Teacher
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
LCs	Learning Coordinators
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NEP	National Education Policy
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OL	Organizational Learning
PC1	Planning Commission 1
PITE	Provincial Institute of Teacher Education
PSOs	Public Sector Organizations

Abbreviations

RoBs	Rules of Business
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAP	Social Action Programme
SEMIS	Sindh Education Management Information System
SMCs	School Management Committees
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SPE	Supervisor Primary Education
STEDA	Sindh Teacher Education Development Authority
TA/DA	Travel Allowance/ Daily Allowance
TORs	Terms of Reference
UCs	Union Councils
UPE	Universal Primary Education

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CHAPTER ONE

*Arguing the Case for Enriching Organisational Learning Theory –
Situating and Articulating the Research Problem*

The aim of the present study is to contribute to theory enrichment on organizational learning in the context of public sector organizations through an in-depth empirical study of the district education sector of Pakistan, using Activity Theory as a theoretical, conceptual and analytical lens. Through presenting a systematic and rigorous review of the existing studies and literature on OL, the current chapter situates the present study and its contribution in the existing knowledge base, and argues for the case to enrich the OL Theory. The current chapter also provides an introduction to the overall structure and organisation of this thesis report.

1.1 OL Theory – Current Conceptualization(s)

The notion of organizational learning (OL) has been present in the management literature for decades. However, it has gained prominence during recent years (see Argyris, 1999; Argyris & Schon, 1978, 1996; Crossan et al., 1999; Daft & Weick, 1984; Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Weick & Roberts, 1993), which indicates the growing importance of knowledge and learning in relation to organizations. It also seems, therefore, that the interest in the discipline is ‘unlikely to be diminished’ (Vince, et al., 2002). Despite, or perhaps also because of, the omnipresence and popularity of organizational learning, the concept is poorly understood and there is confusion regarding its conceptions and meanings (Blackler, 1999; Burgoyne, 1999; Crossan et al., 1999; Evers & Lakomski, 2000; Hendriks, 2003; Hong, Easterby-Smith & Snell, 2006; Popper & Lipshitz, 2000). Before I discuss the reasons in the next paragraph, I would like to argue that this conceptual divergence can be seen as an opportunity (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999; Prange, 1999) rather than a threat, since for many writers (e.g. Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999; Lahteenmaki et al., 2001; Nair, 2001; Lam, 2002; Khandekar & Sharma, 2006), this divergence entails the potential for further progress in the field through conducting more empirical research.

Though organizational learning (OL) has been a key focus in organizational studies and management literature for many decades, yet the theory developed so far has not been able to present a coherent framework of description, explanation and prediction – a social theory needs to perform these functions. This gap becomes even more evident in case of organizational learning in the public sector. Organizational researchers/ scholars have offered various reasons that account for this conceptual confusion; these include, for example, divergence in perceptions and approaches (Rodriguez, 2003), scarcity of empirical studies (Weerd-Nederhof et al., 2002), inconsistent use of terminology (Crossan, Lane & White,

1999), contributions from different disciplines (Easterby-Smith et al., 1998; Hendriks, 2000), and unstated and implicit assumptions about learning and organizations (Gherardi et al., 1998). One response to address this conceptual confusion is to do more empirical work that integrates the concepts and approaches to OL. The conceptual cacophony, as I see it, is rooted in the magical combinations of two words: ‘Organization’ and ‘Learning’. Both these concepts have always attracted researchers and practitioners.

The organizational theories conceptualize organizations in so many different ways; for example: Organization as a ‘rational actor’, as ‘bureaucracies/ processes’, as ‘culture’ and as a garbage can. Morgan (2006), in his seminal book, ‘Images of Organizations’, has described organizations through eight metaphors: Organization as ‘machine’, as ‘organism’, as ‘brain’, as ‘culture’, as ‘political system’, as ‘psychic prison’, as ‘system of change and flux’, and as an ‘instrument of domination’. This indicates the range of conceptualizations available in the literature about organizations. There are some other interesting works also (e.g. Mintzberg, 1979; Bolman & Deal, 1991) on this topic.

Likewise, when it comes to theories related to learning, the richness and diversity of theories is more profound as compared to organizational theories. The understanding of the phenomenon of learning has moved from mere ‘acquisition’ to ‘participation’ and active knowledge construction (e.g., see Paavola & Hakkarainen, 2005). This movement in the understanding of learning from acquisition to participation and knowledge creation is also connected to the conceptualisation of learning as a social process. The following paragraphs provide further elaboration on this.

In OL theory, ‘what is the nature and essence of learning when it is done by organizations’ has been the most perplexing question for decades. Organizational researchers from different fields, ranging from Psychology to Economics, have contributed to the ‘organizational jungle’ which has only thickened the field and has made it almost ‘impenetrable’ (Prange, 1999). Two alternative views, which are often staged as incompatible adversaries, dominate the field. These are the Cognitive-Objectivist and the Social-Practice perspectives on OL (Chiva & Alegre, 2005).

The first view, the Cognitive-Objectivist Perspective, which has been adopted by the major part of the OL literature, is heavily influenced by theories of individual learning. These views, usually labeled as cognitive or technical perspective, propose that either organizations learn like individuals (see for example, Czarniawska-Joerges, cited in Ortenblad, 2002) or individuals within organizations learn as ‘agents’ for the organization (Blackler et al., 1999;

Cook & Yanow, 1996, Popper & Lipshitz, 1998; Ortenblad, 2002). The acquisition metaphor (as proposed by Sfard, 1998) is consistent with this perspective on OL that focuses on the ways individuals acquire knowledge through learning. Consequently, the researchers' focus, using this perspective, has been on how individuals learn in organizations and how this learning is transferred to the organization at various levels.

The second influential view on OL is the Social-Practice Perspective or briefly the 'Social Perspective'. This view, partly developed as a reaction to the cognitive view (Easterby-Smith et al., 2004), emphasizes learning as a social process and draws parallels with the metaphor of 'participation' (as proposed by Sfard, 1998). This view regards organizational learning as a socially constructed phenomenon (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Cook & Yanow, 1996; Lave & Wenger 1991), and focuses on 'knowing' as a context-specific process rather than on knowledge as a product that can be stored (Blackler et al., 1999). This marked a shift from an epistemology of 'possession' to that of 'practice' with respect to the themes of knowledge and knowing (Cook & Brown, 1999). In contrast to the cognitive perspective, which either views power or politics as if they were a persistent problem or simply ignores their possible influence, the social perspective views power and politics as a characteristic of social relations. From this perspective, politics and power play a vital role in the social view of OL, as they bring to the forefront the role of conflict, internal contradictions and tensions between and within social actors.

Both these perspectives, on their own, are arguably flawed as a basis for adequate conception of OL. The Cognitive-Objectivist conceptualization of OL does not do justice to the multiple modes of knowing in action, as various social actors interact with each other. On the other hand, the Social-Practice perspective, when taken in isolation, undermines the role of the individual. If we adopt either of these views in isolation, we would only see part of the picture of what OL entails. I would like to assert that these two perspectives need not be seen as contradictory to each other, rather, as complementary. For a more comprehensive understanding of OL, we need to integrate both these perspectives.

Therefore, the present study takes an integrative view (both, individual and social perspectives) of OL, which aims to engage more fully with the complexity of the phenomenon. Thus, there is a need to conduct empirical work that conceptualizes learning more broadly; for example, learning as dialectics between thoughts and actions, between structure and agency, and between individual and social. Given this perspective, Activity Theory (to be discussed in more details in Chapter 2) becomes the most appropriate choice as a lens to study OL – i.e. as a conceptual and analytical framework. Activity Theory (AT) is

abbreviated form of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), which is not really a single theory; rather, it is an approach to analyze human activity over a period of time. The theory offers a practice-oriented approach to explain collective learning. AT originated in Russian cultural psychology and is now in its third generation. It offers interesting perspectives on organizational studies, and offers a powerful analysis framework to study the evolution of practice or activity and explanation of how system is evolving or developing.

The above discussion indicates that since the theories of OL are based on certain assumptions regarding the theory of ‘organization’ as well as the theory of ‘learning’ (Blackler, 1995), these have contributed to the current conceptualisation of OL Theory and related/ consequent gaps. I present these knowledge gaps in the following paragraphs so as to discuss how the conceptualization of the current study addresses these gaps in the existing OL Theory and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of OL.

1.2 Organisational Learning Theory – the Specific Knowledge Gaps

The existing knowledge gaps related to OL theory are presented and discussed below as overlapping and interconnecting dimensions.

1.2.1 Lack of/ Limited Attention to ‘Learning Processes’ – the Knowledge Gap One

An over-emphasis on learning outcomes rather than on learning processes is quite evident in the existing literature on OL (e.g. see the extensive review of OL literature by Huysman, 1999). That the ‘black box’ of learning processes needs yet to be uncovered is an observation shared by many other researchers also (e.g. see Crossan et al., 1999; Easterby-Smith & Aurajo, 1999; Prang, 1999). The probable reason for this inattention seems to be the difficulties involved in unraveling the mystique of learning, and the issue goes back to the very conceptualization of the phenomenon: The traditional theories of ‘learning’ define learning as a change either in behavior or in cognition, which diverts focus from processes to outcomes.

Second, the OL literature also has an ‘improvement bias’, which also implies that learning is linked directly to the ‘outcome’ of the learning process – this lopsided view has contributed to the existing insufficient attention to the learning processes that take place. Most contributions in relation to learning processes assume that learning takes place through aligning the organization with its environment (Huysman, 1999), which is problematic, as

learning then gets associated with positive outcomes only. What is being learnt gets ignored – if learning is not positive and/ or contributing to improvement, it gets either ignored or labelled as barriers to learning. This conception of learning as ‘positive’ or ‘improvement’ presents a limited view.

Third, the conception gets further limited where the study of OL processes gives limited attention to the role of the context – many studies portray quite universalistic assumptions about context. For instance, a study of ‘processes’ in the context of public sector and that also in a developing country would be quite different from a study of OL in a private sector, situated in the context of a developed economies. Moreover, the developing countries’ context (such as Pakistan), generally characterized as high power-distance culture, is a largely uncharted territory when it comes to studying the OL processes. Furthermore, the nuanced understanding that comes through studying OL as a dialectical process is another area that needs to be rigorously studied so as to enrich the existing OL theories and perspectives. Thus, filling the Knowledge Gap One implies the following:

The OL theory needs to be enriched through a nuanced understanding of OL processes.

1.2.2 Insufficient Insights regarding how Power Mediates the OL Processes – the Knowledge Gap Two

Understanding learning as an ‘uncontested’ activity, with a greater emphasis on learning as ‘outcomes’ (and that also positive ones), and the conception of organization as a ‘harmonious’ body of individuals versus having ‘heterogeneous’ reality – these also indicate the other areas of deficiencies, such as an evident under-emphasis on the crucial nexus of power and politics when studying OL (see Easterby-Smith et al., 2000; Ferdinand, 2004).

The OL processes take place in the landscape of differential power positions and relations (Easterby-Smith et al., 2000; Elkjaer & Brandi, 2014; Vince, 2001; Zietsma et al., 2002); therefore, how power mediates the organizational learning processes becomes very important area for further exploration. Understanding learning primarily as a way to engage with others in an ongoing practice (in the field of differential powers) opens up intriguing questions – for instance, how is submission or consent achieved and how is modification in established relation negotiated? Therefore, there is a need for OL theory which takes the

political nature of information and knowledge as an indispensable element to be accounted for when studying processes of OL (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999).

Furthermore, the study of power mediations in the political context of public sector organizations, situated in developing countries and characterized as high-distance power cultures, becomes an area of further significance and relevance that needs to be explored. Additionally, the case of Pakistan – as a representative case of a ‘post-colonial’ South Asian context, presents itself as an important site for empirical work. Thus, the heterogeneous realities of the organisational context with a special emphasis on how power mediates the OL processes become a significant dimension for further studies in order to enrich the OL theory. In this connection, filling the Knowledge Gap Two implies the following:

The OL theory needs to be enriched through an enhanced understanding of how power mediates the processes of learning.

1.2.3 Limited Understanding of the Dialects between Context and Agency – the Knowledge Gap Three

The OL and context, when brought together, produce an intricate web of concepts/discussions. Both, the organizational context and the context of the organizations in which they are working, have implications for the OL theory. In this regard, various deficiencies have been identified by different organizational researchers when it comes to OL and context – these are discussed below in some detail.

First, it has been noted (e.g. by Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999) that most of the empirical studies done so far have been situated in the contexts of North America and Europe, highlighting a strong need for empirical work done outside of these contexts. Researchers in other fields of studies have also highlighted such need (e.g. see Örtengren, Babur & Kumari, 2012).

Second, insufficient attention has been paid to the variety of organizational contexts while developing the OL theory. A systematic review of the OL literature, for instance, suggests that there seems an overreliance on the private sector for both the conceptualization as well as empirical work; however, due to differences between public and private sector, the unassuming transfer of theory and empirical findings from private firms to public services is problematic (Finger & Brand, 1999; Hartley, 2006). Apart from the universalistic

assumptions about theories and their transfer (see Ortenblad, Bajunid, Babur, & Kumari, 2011; Bajunid, Babur, & Kumari, 2014 on the problematic nature of universalistic assumptions), this lack of attention can be ascribed to the existing ‘improvement’ bias in the OL literature – e.g. some researchers (see Hong, 1999) find the traditional bureaucracies as deficient in facilitating the processes of organizational learning. The dialectics between OL processes and organizational context in the public sector, thus, call for greater investigation.

Third, since OL theory, in its current form, seems to implicitly assume all organizations to be of the same kind, engaged in learning as a stable entity with well-defined boundaries (Easterby-Smith et al., 2000), and as mechanistic, goal-oriented and routine-based systems (Lundberg, quoted in Lumpkin & Lichtenstein, 2005) – this view glosses over the contingent nature of collective organizational efforts (Easterby-Smith et al., 2000). In addition, it also blurs the heterogeneity of organizations and projects, presenting instead organizations as harmonious assemblies of rational individuals involved in neat exercises of persuasion based on agreed goals. This assumed unity, which is quite problematic, seems to have its roots in the early individual-centered psychological (cognitive) theories of learning, which later on fed into the OL theory. In this view, social power contestations have been treated as theoretically irrelevant to the processes of learning. On the basis of their extensive review of literature, Bapuji and Crossan (2004) assert that there is a need to revisit some of the organizational theories by incorporating the assumptions that organizations learn, and that they learn heterogeneously.

Fourth, another dimension that needs significant attention is how the ‘context’ is conceptualized in the existing studies on OL. The OL theory, by and large, seems to be guided by the conception of context as a container and an inert background which allows or hinders the processes of OL inside it, rather than viewing context as both, the medium and outcome of the human activities. This dominant conception is evident in the existing literature, where context has been regarded and acknowledged as a static background against which abstract competencies are realized (Easterby-Smith, 1998; Glisby & Holden, 2003). The conceptualization of ‘context’ as a historical and social product, which is co-produced with the activities it supports (Gherardi et al., 1998), needs further attention when studying OL.

Fifth, the mainstream literature on OL is based on dualisms – e.g. dualisms of ‘individual versus organization’, and ‘structure versus agency’ (see Berends, Boersma & Weggeman, 2003) – likewise, ‘learning and doing’ are considered to have dualistic separation

(see Elkjaer, 1995), which is problematic and has resulted in privileging one category over the other. There is, thus, a need to study the dialectics between ‘context’ and ‘agency’.

To sum up, the existing universalistic assumptions regarding OL theories, reflected in the current conceptualization of context with reference to OL theories – i.e. assuming ‘context’ as neutral and external to the process, and acting as a ‘container’ only, or assuming that OL in the private sector will look similar to OL in the context of public sector, or that the insights generated regarding OL in a North American context can be universally applied to a context in Asia – these are quite problematic, and so is the existing dualistic/ dichotomous focus and emphasis on context and agency or individual and group learning instead of a dialectical view. There is, thus, need for more empirical work that explicitly acknowledges the heterogeneous reality of organizational life rather than viewing organisations as homogenous or harmonious assemblies of rational individuals. The public sector affords a rich and complex site for teasing out the elements that are specific to organization type in developing the OL theory. Thus, there is clearly a need for robust theory and evidence derived directly from the public sector, in the context of countries other than North America (especially, developing economies in Asia).

Thus, based on a discussion of the above identified areas/ dimensions of OL (vis-à-vis context) that have received limited attention or remained undermined, filling the Knowledge Gap Three implies the following:

The OL theory needs to be enriched through gaining a nuanced understanding of the dialectics between context and agency.

The dominant approaches to OL have, by and large, failed to capture the nuances of organisational processes as well as the mediation of power and context – this is where the present study makes its contribution by taking into account these important dimensions when studying OL in the public sector of Pakistan (within its high power-distance and political culture) using the lens of Activity Theory (so as to capture the dialectical relationships as well as the heterogeneous realities of the context – i.e. context as co-evolving).

The following paragraphs present the existing work in relation to OL in the Public Sector Organisations (PSOs) in general and Pakistan in particular to discuss how the current study contributes to the existing knowledge base.

Organisational Learning in Public Sector Organisations

As the above discussion has established, the conception of OL theory is heavily influenced by empirical work done in private sector organizations from North America and Europe (Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999). The major part of the OL literature assumes that the organization, by default, is a private company (e.g. Argote et al. 2003; Beeby & Booth, 2000). In other words, there is lack of sufficient empirical work contributing to the theorization of OL (See Finger & Brand, 1999; Rashman, Withers & Hartley, 2009; Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004). Similar conclusions were drawn by Bate and Robert (2002), who argue that innovation initiatives in the public health service sector have, to date, been scarce. At the same time, however, and as a consequent realization of this shortcoming, the efforts to fill in this knowledge gap continue and both, empirical and theoretical contributions, continue to be made (for instance, see Aycan, Kanungo, Mendonca, Yu, Deller, Stalh & Kurshid, 2000; Boyne, 2002; Finger & Brand, 1999; Maden, 2012). Rashman et al. (2009) indicates:

The dominant assumption that an organization is likely to be a private sector firm has an impact on the definition of organizational learning and knowledge, because the characteristics of organizational learning and knowledge tend to be framed by private sector, market-oriented conceptualizations.

This view that organizational form determines its capability of collective learning and use of organizational knowledge has been supported by various researchers (e.g. see Blackler, 1995; Lam, 2000). Thus, there is a need to conduct research in different contexts and different forms of organizations. The above arguments make the present study very relevant.

Organizational researchers have noted that the public and private sector organizations differ in fundamental ways such as in terms of the very purpose of the organization. The private sector, in contrast to the public sector, is mainly motivated and driven by business performance while public sector organizations originate from the spirit of public service and focus on public policy (McNabb, 2006). To what extent is the purpose of the organization shared among its members – this is also an important question to consider. The researcher's experience and observations over the years suggest that the members of the public sector organization have greater difficulty in articulating the purpose of their organization. What will count as success is, therefore, also arguably different for public and private sector organizations, as the answer to this question is also closely linked to the very purpose of the organization. For the private sector, profits, revenue, growth and customers' satisfaction are

the keywords, whereas, the public sector organizations aim for public policy (Joshi & Chawla, 2010) and social gains (Aycan et al., 2000). Therefore, how the purpose of an organisation influences its learning becomes an important focus for exploration.

There is an immense and increasing pressure on the public sector organizations to perform, to become efficient and effective, and to become LOs (LO being an ideal and an aspiration). As Maden (2012) puts it, this pressure has been increasing with the rise of globalization, technological progress, and emerging global possibilities for big enterprises. Johnston (2012) has proposed that public organizations need to change into ‘learnaucracy’ (based on individual empowerment and a culture of reflexivity) from bureaucracy (based on hierarchical authority, rules and order). Organizational learning in the public sector is considered to be a key driver in improving the change and renewal of the public sector (Barrette, Lemyre, Corneil, & Beauregard, 2012). Within the available work, the implicit consensus seems to be on the importance of transforming public service organizations into learning organizations and on identification of hurdles that hinder in doing so; for instance, hurdles such as low commitment (Boyne, 2002; Goulet & Frank, 2002), over emphasis on process and procedures (Barrados & Mayne, 2003; Willem & Buelenslack, 2007), lack of learning environment and, especially, organization wide learning (Maden, 2012), ‘risk aversion behavior’ (Barrados & Mayne, 2003) and too much top-down management (Barrados & Mayne, 2003; Yusoff, 2005).

One can draw parallels, as these are the kind of issues that are faced by public sector organizations in the developing world also e.g. in Pakistan. In case of developing countries, however, an additional dimension causing constraint is the broader context of poverty, economic crises, corruption, and political instability (Grindle, 1997). Similar conviction is evident in LaPalombara’s (2001) observation that public organizations arguably face more constraints in learning because of constitutional constraints, wider accountability expectations, and multiple constituencies. This is, thus, a consistent finding, not very different from the organizational context of public sector elsewhere, especially, in the developing world.

The public organizations, typically identified as professional bureaucracies in Mintzberg’s (1979) terms, put a lot of emphasis on processes, procedures and paperwork which has led to inefficiencies and red-tapism (Willem & Buelens, 2007). Complex policy and political environment, formal control of politicians, and high degree of scrutiny and accountability are distinctive characteristics of public service management (Hartley & Skelcher, 2008, cited in Rashman et al., 2009). This considerable presence of political power

means that initiatives need both, political and departmental approvals. The discussion of learning in relation to the public sector organization highlights the hierarchical and political nature of government agencies (Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004), lack of vertical and horizontal networks (Bate and Robert, 2002), and unresponsiveness to change (Betts & Holden, 2003). Political influence/ environment and organizational learning, as documented by some organizational scholars (see Common, 2004; Syed-Ikhsan & Rowland, 2004), have been negatively linked with each other. These studies seem to have taken up a-political approach to OL, which is problematic.

Given the political nature of public sector organizations, Common (2004) highlighted the importance of policy frameworks that, in turn, facilitate policy development. This means analysis of policy documents would be very crucial in understanding OL processes in a public sector organization. Bate and Robert (2002) have identified the significance of ‘informal structures’ for developing OL in public sector. In a similar vein, Child and Faulkner (1998, cited in Rashman et al., 2009) noted the importance of norms, values, technical language and fundamental concepts among learning entities as a stimulus to collective learning. At implementation level, Roland (2007), associating OL with organizational performance in the public sector context of Singapore, has identified reward and recognition as catalysts for the ‘development of organizational learning’. The present study, employing the Activity Theory framework, gives particular attention to the crucial elements associated with OL in the public sector.

Public sector organisations seem to be more concerned with improving the same tasks (single-loop learning) rather than a reconsideration of goals and underlying worldview/ assumptions (double-loop learning) (see Argyris & Schön, 1996; Betts & Holden, 2003; Common, 2004). Moynihan and Landuyt (2009) have observed that distinct routes to learning – as either cultural or structural – have been taken up by organizational researchers. There is a need to ‘bridge the cultural and structural divide’ (as Moynihan & Landuyt, 2009, have attempted to do so in their empirical work). Pokharel and Hult (2010) have identified four different types of organizational learning in the public sector: Conscious (OL as project), façade (false sense of learning), unaware (not knowing that learning is taking place), and absent learning (no learning is taking place).

To conclude with reference to the study of OL in PSOs, there are a few assumptions: a) this is an under-researched area; b) the frameworks used to study are limited; c) methodological richness and variation are limited; and d) the PSOs generally present such challenges and constraints that hinder them from organisational learning. Based on the

rationale that there is ‘relatively little research done on organisational learning in the public sector’ (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2009, p. 1097), public sector, thus, becomes a very important organizational type and setting for study.

Moreover, since the context of the present study is the public sector in Pakistan, it is important to take a quick and brief look at the existing studies on public sector in Pakistan that have used the concept of ‘learning in/ by organizations’.

Organisational Learning in Public Sector Organisations in Pakistan

The following paragraphs discuss the available literature on public sector organisations in the context of Pakistan with reference to ‘learning in/ by organizations so as to understand how the current study makes a contribution to what is already known on this topic.

In the context of public sector of Pakistan, as evident through the review of literature, there seems to be a consensus among scholars on two things: a) that public sector organizations need to reform themselves and become learning organizations (normative); and b) that public sector organizations are under researched in relation to knowledge and learning (descriptive observation). The present study contributes to both the above identified areas.

The existing work on learning in/ by public sector organizations has mainly taken up a ‘normative approach’ – using an LO approach. The major chunk of the existing empirical work has borrowed/adopted theoretical frameworks from Senge (2006) or Watkins and Marsick (1996): As elaborative examples of such work, see Healey and Destefano (1997); Siddiqui and Fariduddin (n.d); Malik, Danish and Munir (2012); and Abbas et al. (2011). The present study, by taking a descriptive approach, may contribute to the existing understanding of public sector organization in relation to learning.

The empirical focus (in terms of selection of the research sites) of the existing studies has been diverse, such as public registration office (see Malik, Danish & Munir, 2012), higher education institutions (e.g. Abbas et al.; Malik, Danish & Munir, 2012); public sector organizations related to media, bank, development authority etc. (see Abass, Hayat, Shahzad & Riaz, 2011). Additionally, in the available literature, the scope of work or population coverage is quite limited. For instance, in some cases, the findings are based on 20 open-ended interviews with members of one specific organization (Siddiqui & Fariduddin, n.d), or responses from 55 female managers (Alam, 2009), on self-administered questionnaires (Abbas et al.), or on a small and convenient sample of public sector HEIs in one province of Pakistan (Malik, Danish & Munir, 2012). The present study takes up a very rigorous

approach to studying the public sector of education in Pakistan, which has the potential to inform further work in the public sector.

Public sector organization in Pakistan presents the opportunities to discuss and analyse OL in an organization that is deeply hierarchical, and is situated in a developing country's context, where compliance to power and authority are core competencies and skills required from the employees; where employees enjoy high level of job security (Malik, Danish & Munir, 2012); and where performance, by all practical measures, is not linked to promotion (Abbasi, 2011).

The above discussion clearly highlights the need for further theory enrichment in the area of OL that could address the identified knowledge gaps. In the context of the existing weak conceptualisation of OL Theory, the current study responds to this need for further theory enhancement: The proposed study intends to explore organizational learning processes (to address Knowledge Gap One), taking into account the dialectical relationship between context and agency (to address Knowledge Gap Three) within the context of public sector of education in Pakistan, which is characterized by heterogeneity as well as power and politics in the public sector organizations (to address Knowledge Gap Two). The public sector organizations are characterized by heterogeneity, as various actors, such as staff unions and professional associations, balance complex, asymmetrical relations in the co-construction of organizational reality. This heterogeneity has also contributed to internal and external conflicts, power and politics in the public sector organizations (Knowledge Gap Two). These characteristics of public sector make this sector a relevant research site. Further details on the research site are discussed in Chapter Three. The subsequent sections provide further elaboration through discussing the purpose, focus, rationale and significance of the study.

1.3 Purpose of the Current Study

As argued in the above paragraphs, the principal objective of this study is to contribute to the theory enrichment on organizational learning through using Activity Theory as a theoretical, conceptual and analytical lens. As will be elaborated below, it is more specifically aimed at enriching OL theory in the context of the public sector organizations through an in-depth empirical study of the district education sector of Pakistan.

The objective of this study is to enrich OL theory through addressing the three inextricably linked knowledge gaps in the current OL theory. Since the gaps are rooted in the

core issue of dialectics between the individual (agency) and collectives (structures, social, contextual) in OL, the study takes a dialectical approach to OL (using AT as a lens) which is based on the inextricable internal linkages of these categories. Basseches (2005) defines dialectic as a ‘developmental movement’ through forms which occur through constitutive and interactive relationships.

1.4 Research Focus

As discussed above, the principal objective of this study is to contribute to the theory enrichment on organizational learning using AT as a lens (an integral part of the study’s objective). Thus, the main research question that the study focuses is:

How do the dialectical relationships between individuals and collectives and between structures and agency constitute organizational learning in public sector organizations in Pakistan?

The current study attempts to address the above identified knowledge gaps and for doing so, conceptualizes organization as an ‘activity system’ (adopted from Blackler, 1993) and learning as change in the activity system. To explore the organizational learning processes, Blackler’s Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is used as a conceptual framework, especially, since it presents itself as a comprehensive framework to study the organisational dialects/ dialectical relationships within organisation. It takes into account the dialectical relationships between individuals and collectives and between structures and agency within the context of public sector of education in Pakistan. From the lens of AT, context, learning, subject and activity cannot be separated; thereby, activity theory provides a powerful framework for analyzing human activity over a period of time (especially, in relation to change), and for explicating and understanding contextual and cultural factors. It is also important to mention here that AT itself is not an OL theory, but has been used as a conceptual and analytical framework to study OL.

AT is already being used in some OL theoretical efforts, but its potential for understanding OL extends these present approaches; for example, potential to understand the dialectics between power and learning. A further description of AT and the justification for its use in the present research will be provided in Chapter Three.

1.5 Research Objective

As discussed earlier, the current study contributes to theory enrichment in OL through responding to the specific knowledge gaps identified in the beginning of the current chapter. The identified knowledge gaps indicate the need for more empirical work that explicitly acknowledges the heterogeneous reality of organizational life through more robust theory and evidence derived directly from the public sector. They also highlight the need for enhanced understanding of OL processes in addition to the current over-emphasis on learning outcomes (addressing Knowledge Gap One) – for instance, the dialectics between context and agency (addressing Knowledge Gap Three) and how power mediates the processes of learning need to be studied (addressing Knowledge Gap Two).

Thus, the principal objective of this study is to contribute to the theory enrichment on organizational learning when using the lens of Activity Theory, which provides a comprehensive and robust framework to study the dialectical relationships in the context of OL. More specifically, it aims at enriching OL theory in the context of the public sector organizations through an in-depth empirical study of the district education sector of Pakistan.

1.6 Research Questions

1.6.1 Main Question

How do the dialectical relationships between individuals and collectives and between structures and agency constitute organizational learning in public sector organizations in Pakistan?

The study aims to contribute to OL Theory and also intends to develop suggestions for improving the management practice in similar contexts. The study requires an-in depth analysis of the management practice in a specific public sector organization and confidence in the applicability (resonance) of these findings to similar contexts. With reference to the Activity Theory, a broader cultural-historical analysis becomes an important condition for carrying out the in-depth analysis of the specific case. Thus, the specific subsidiary questions follow:

1.6.2 Subsidiary Questions

1. How has management practice evolved in the public sector of Pakistan? What is the cultural-historical context of public sector management in Pakistan, and how has it influenced the management practice in the public sector of education?
2. How has the education management practice evolved and been enacted in a selected district of Sindh?
3. Does the management practice in one district have similar pattern/ resonance in other districts in the province (Sindh), too?
4. What are the insights for developing the OL theory, and what are the implications for improving management practice in similar contexts?

1.7 Assumptions of the Study

The current study is based on certain assumptions: The *first* assumption is that OL in public sector is likely to be different from that of OL in the private sector. The *second* assumption is that the nature of findings will thus enrich the OL theory. *Third*, OL would prove to be a very useful lens to study public sector organisations, in general. *Fourth*, an important assumption is that the findings of the study will be used to improve the processes and outcomes of the public sector organisations.

1.8 Scientific and Societal Relevance the Research

The proposed study primarily aims at theory enrichment in OL through empirical research – one of the academically valid ways of theory enrichment. However, some practical implications can also be drawn from its findings. Thereby, the study has relevance both, for academics (scientific relevance) as well as for practitioners (societal relevance). In the following paragraphs, both scientific and societal relevance has been discussed.

1.8.1 Scientific Relevance – Knowledge Contribution

The central concern of OL literature is: What is the nature of learning when it is done by organizations? In spite of voluminous literature available, there are various specific knowledge gaps regarding our understanding of the processes of organizational learning,

issue of context, nexus between power and knowledge, and undermining the heterogeneous nature of organizational life (see earlier discussion on knowledge gaps).

A good volume of empirical work done on OL during the past decades either privileges individuals over collective or vice versa (however, there are a few notable exceptions where dialectics between individual and organization were acknowledged, such as Blackler et al, 1999; Engestrom, 1987; 1999). The dialectical description can potentially explain the learning processes in richer ways, and captures the complexity of the phenomenon of OL. This is where the study aims to make a significant contribution.

Further, the current conceptualization of OL is deficient both, in terms of the context of the organizations (see Easterby-Smith & Araujo, 1999) and the kind of organization engaged with learning, as most of the current literature is from private sector organizations based in Europe or North America. The proposed study seeks to contribute to this central discussion. The study also connects to the current debates on the relationship of learning and the effects of organizational characteristics on learning.

1.8.2. Societal Relevance – Implications for Social Change

The proposed study, besides its scientific relevance, is quite significant and timely for various reasons and at various levels. In the context of Pakistan, the current education sector reforms require district education departments to play a key role in transforming school education in Pakistan. Any plan to enable the district education departments to perform their role satisfactorily will require thorough investigation of pertinent institutional and organizational development issues at the district level, before developing any viable strategy. In this respect, the present study contributes significantly. In the context of public sector, as the policy and governance structure are similar in nature, the study carries useful pointers for other public sector organizations in Pakistan.

At much broader level, the study is relevant both for practitioners and researchers concerned with public sector in developing countries and in Pakistan, particularly. The investigation has particular relevance for the member countries of ANTRIEP (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Indonesia, China, Korea, and Malaysia), which have similar school management systems, having at least three layers of educational managers above the school (Kandasamy & Blaton, 2004).

1.9 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study looks at District Education Management as a ‘representative’ case of public sector in a developing country’s context. Though the findings have implications for other public sector organisations in Pakistan and in developing countries’ context, the findings may not be overgeneralized. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made (through data generation workshops with relatively larger audience) towards pattern seeking i.e. to map whether the insights generated through the case study are similar or different in nature to other organisations across the country.

1.10 Overview of the Thesis

Chapter One – as an introduction and background to the research study – states, discusses and situates the problem of Organisational Learning (OL) in the context of public sector of a developing country (Pakistan). It presents a systematic and rigorous review of the existing literature on OL, mapping OL in general, in public sector in particular, and also in the public sector organisations in developing countries (and, especially, Pakistan). Based on a critique of the existing weak conceptualization of the OL theory and situating the study and its contribution in relation to the existing knowledge gaps, it argues the case for enriching the OL theory, through bringing in evidence from the public sector organisations, and using a robust framework i.e. the Activity Theory.

Next, *Chapter Two* presents the overall research design, explaining how the study of OL in the public sector of a developing country’s context has been designed – e.g. the key design considerations, the conceptual and analytical framework, the multiple phases of research, the methodological choices vis-à-vis the research context (including research tools and participants), the significance and rationale of the decisions taken, etc.

The chapter on research design is followed by the overall findings and analysis of the study, organised in terms of three chapters. *Chapter Three* responds to the first subsidiary research question (RQ1) and presents findings of Phase I of the study i.e. it analyses how the management practice has evolved in the public sector of Pakistan, what the cultural-historical context of public sector management in Pakistan is, and how it has influenced the management practice in public sector of education. It traces the evolution of public education management within the broader context of political developments in Pakistan followed by a

macro view of the current situation or context of educational management. *Chapter Four* presents findings of Phase II of the study i.e. it presents an in-depth study of how the education management practice has evolved and been enacted in a selected district of Sindh (responding to RQ2) – a case study of OL in the district education office in Sindh, using Activity Theory as a framework of analysis.

Chapter Five subsequently responds to RQ3 and presents findings of Phase III of the study – i.e. it discusses whether the management practice in one district has similar pattern/ resonance to that in the other districts in the province (Sindh). It presents the analysis and discussion of the findings generated through the data generation workshops conducted with district education officials/ managers (and other key stakeholders) across the province to explore whether the findings of the Case Study are consistent or divergent when compared to the other district education offices in Sindh. The chapter presents an analysis of the organisational images, the organisational roles, followed by an analysis of the organisational discourse and organisational narratives.

The overall synthesis and conclusion of the study are presented as *Chapters Six and Seven*, highlighting the implications as well as knowledge contribution of the study to the theory of Organisation Learning and also to the Activity Theory as a methodological framework for organizational studies. These two chapters respond to RQ4 by presenting the insights for developing the OL Theory, and by articulating the implications for improving management practice in similar contexts (i.e. presents findings from Phase IV of the study). Chapter 6 pulls together the overall analysis and discussion. Using Activity Theory (and the key research questions) as the organizing framework, it provides a synthesis of the main findings presented in the previous chapters; whereas, Chapter 7 highlights the knowledge contribution as well as the implications of the study. The overall Knowledge Organizing Framework is presented in Table 1.1.

The next chapter (Chapter Two) presents the overall research design – the methodological choices vis-à-vis the research context i.e. explaining how the study of OL in the public sector of a developing country's context has been designed.

Table 1.1: The Knowledge Organizing Framework

Main Focus	
Study of Organizational Learning	Chapter 1
↓	
Literature Review	Chapter 1
↓	
Knowledge Gaps	Chapter 1

<p><i>Addressing Knowledge Gap One implies:</i> The OL theory needs to be enriched through a nuanced understanding of OL processes</p> <p><i>Addressing Knowledge Gap Two implies:</i> The OL theory needs to be enriched through an enhanced understanding of how power mediates the processes of learning</p> <p><i>Addressing Knowledge Gap Three implies:</i> The OL theory needs to be enriched through gaining a nuanced understanding of the dialectics between context and agency</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Main Research Objective</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To contribute to theory enrichment on Organizational Learning (OL) in a public sector organisation using Activity Theory (AT) as a framework</p>		Chapter 1, Chapter 2 (Revisited)
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Main Research Question</p> <p style="text-align: center;">How do the dialectical relationships between individuals and collectives and between structures and agency constitute organizational learning in public sector organizations in Pakistan?</p>		Chapter 1, Chapter 2 (Revisited)
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Subsidiary Research Questions</p> <p>Q.1 How has management practice evolved in the public sector of Pakistan? What is the cultural-historical context of public sector management in Pakistan, and how has it influenced the management practice in public sector of education?</p> <p>Q.2 How has the education management practice evolved and enacted in a selected district of Sindh?</p> <p>Q.3 Does the management practice in one district have similar pattern/ resonance in other districts in the province (Sindh), too?</p> <p>Q.4 What are the insights for developing the OL theory, and what are the implications for improving management practice in similar contexts?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">↔</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Conceptual/ Analytical Framework of the Study</p> <p>The Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)</p> <p>Activity Theory (AT) is a practice-based approach to organisational studies. According to AT, OL is conceptualised as change in the (management) practice, and practice is developed over a period of time (see details in Chapter One as well as current chapter).</p> <p>Based on this understanding, therefore, the subsidiary questions are listed here.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	Chapter 2
<p style="text-align: center;">Study Design</p>		Chapter 2
Phase I: Cultural-Historical Analysis of the Activity System	←	Subsidiary RQ 1 Chapter 4
Phase II: In-depth Analysis of the Case of OL in the Activity System		Subsidiary RQ 2 Chapter 5
Phase III: Pattern Seeking of OL at Provincial Level		Subsidiary RQ 3 Chapter 6
Phase IV: Synthesis & Conclusion: Knowledge Contribution of the Study and Implications		Subsidiary RQ 4 Chapter 7 Chapter 8

CHAPTER TWO

Research Context and Methodological Choices – Designing the Study of OL in Public Sector in a Developing Country's Context

The current chapter (Chapter Two) provides elaboration of the research project itself, the approach taken in the research, the theoretical framework used, the methodological and technical research design considerations, necessary data and their availability, description of research site and context, and elaboration of phases of the study, including research methods, tools and participant details.

The chapter, thus, presents and discusses the overall theoretical framework and research design used to respond to the research question that the present study explores i.e. how do the dialectical relationships between individuals and collectives, and between structures and agency constitute organizational learning in public sector organizations in Pakistan?

2.1 Theoretical Framework to Address the Knowledge Gaps: The Activity Theory (AT)

As discussed in Chapter One, the current study contributes to theory enrichment in OL in the context of the public sector organizations through an in-depth empirical study of the district education sector of Pakistan, while using the lens of Activity Theory. In order to address the above knowledge gaps – i.e. to study the OL processes, using context as embedded, to capture the heterogeneous reality of public sector organisations and the power mediations within these – Activity Theory is used as a powerful, conceptual tool; the rationale and justification for which is provided in the following lines.

2.1.1 The Cultural-Historical Theory of Activity – A Description

The Cultural-Historical Theory of Activity, generally referred to as the ‘Activity Theory’, has its roots in the work of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) and his colleagues, A. R. Luria (1902–77) and A. N. Leont'ev (1903-1979). Vygotsky (1896-1934) introduced the concept of artifact-mediated and object-oriented action. Vygotsky argued that a human cannot act on the world directly and that all human actions are mediated through tools. These tools include physical, conceptual and symbolic tools. This concept of mediated action is the foundation of the AT (see Fig. 2.1).

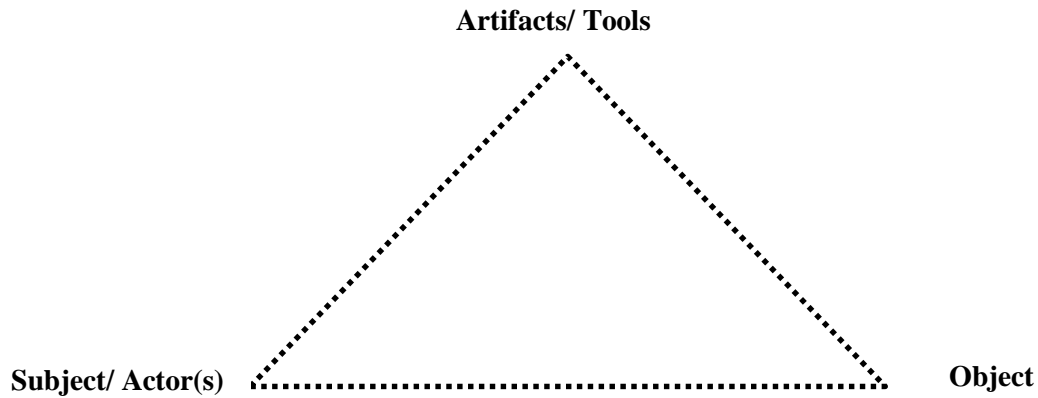


Fig 2.1: Activity Theory and the Concept of Mediated Action

The subject shapes the object using the artifacts/ tools, and the subject also gets transformed in turn through the use of the tools. The subject cannot be understood without object and the description of the object without subject renders little meaning. Cole (1996) asserts that the traditional dichotomies, such as of subject and object, cannot be separated analytically. This means that the dichotomy of the subject and object is problematic. Vygotsky's concept of mediated actions and the later conceptual developments contribute to the development of Cultural Historical Activity Theory.

The present study uses Engeström's model of activity theory (1987) as a theoretical and analytical lens. Fig 2.2 provides diagrammatic illustration of the activity system as conceptualized by Engeström (1987).

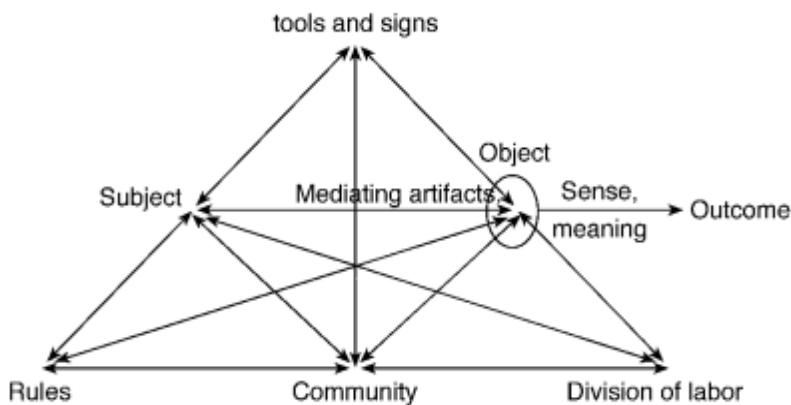


Fig 2.2: The Structure of a Human Activity System (Engeström, 1987, p. 78).

The model comprises of subject (an individual or group), object, tools, community, rules and division of labor. Garrison (2001) asserted that the components of the activity system are

transactive and reciprocally defining. The following paragraph provides a brief description of these components of the AT.

Subject

Subject (actor) refers to individual or individuals whose agency is selected as the analytical point of view (Hasu & Engestrom, 2000). Subject could be an individual or a group based on the level of analysis to be done (Marken, 2006). For the present study, the subject refers to the educational officers involved in the management of schools.

Object

Kaptelinin (2005) asserts that the ‘object of activity’ is one of the most basic concepts of activity theory. Objects are what people work towards (Deken & Lauche, 2014). The object could be a physical, material or a problem space which is to be transformed into outcomes with the help of tools. Object is the ultimate reason behind different actors and, thus, can be considered as the sense maker in the activity system (Kaptelinin, 2005). The object of the present study is management of public schools for provision of quality education. Tracking the evolution of the object is very relevant for the present study.

Tools/ Artifacts

Tools or Artifacts refer to conceptual as well as physical tools that the subject uses in pursuing his/ her object (Postma, Lauche & Stappers, 2012). Official field visits (school visits) by the education managers (Supervisors), for instance, are illustrative examples of tools in relation to the present study. Tools play an important role in the realization of the object of an activity system.

Community

The community in the activity system consists of individuals/ groups who share the same object. Marken (2006) understands community as the stakeholders of the system. The inclusion of community in the activity system provides venue for bringing in contextual variables as integral part of this description. For instance, in case of the present study, policy makers, teachers, parents, students and others form the community.

Rules

The subject in the activity system relates to community via certain rules. Rules refer to implicit and explicit norms and conventions that govern the relationship between the subjects and their community. Rules could be implicit or explicit. The rules (written or unwritten) could enable or constraint actions of the subject(s). In the present study, rules refer to both, the contextual norms (such as pleasing the boss) as well as the official rules relating to organizational resources.

Roles/ Division of Labor

Division of labor in the AT framework refers to the vertical and horizontal division of roles and responsibilities of subject and community (Postma, Lauche & Stappers, 2012). The distribution of roles is also connected to the distribution of power (Murphy & Rodriguez-Manzanares, 2008). Within the context of the present study, the fact that a teacher in the same pay scale has lower power than an educational manager provides an illustrative example. Engeström's model of activity theory links individuals, their work, colleagues and the activity they are engaged in, along with the factors that mediate these relations (see Fig. 2.2 above).

The upper half of the triangle represents the material context of an activity while the lower half of the triangle (rules, community and division of labour) represents the social context (Postma, Lauche & Stappers, 2012). This model provides a useful framework to design and structure the current study.

The following paragraphs present key concepts of the activity theory that are in the context of the present study.

Object-oriented Activity: Activity systems are object-oriented. By acting on their objects, activity systems both, stabilize objects and push them into movement (Engeström & Blackler, 2005). The object embodies the meaning and purpose of a collective activity system, and is partly given and partly constructed by the subjects (actors engaged in the activity). In the present study, the given object is also described as an 'official object'.

The construction of object is a collaborative and dialogical process, which is characterized by different perspectives and voices (Engeström, 1999). Identifying the object of the activity, and tracing its development over time provides the basis for reaching a deeper and more structured understanding of otherwise fragmented pieces of evidence (Kapitlan, 2005).

Mediation: The core of activity theory is that human activities and higher psychological functions are mediated by tools (material objects) and signs (symbolic systems) (Aalst & Hill, 2006). The tools or mediating artifacts can be categorized as: a) internal or cognitive artifacts, such as mental models; and b) external or practical artifacts such as tools (Engestrom, 1999). The conceptual tools include “principles, frameworks, and ideas” (Grossman et al., 1999). The general function of the conceptual tools is to help people in thinking about a particular issue (Honig, 2008). Practical tools provide specific examples of “practices, strategies, and resources” that have “local and immediate utility” (Grossman et al., 1999). The tools which are available to various organizational members are products of participation as well as central elements in participation (Blackler, 1995; Knapp, 2008).

In addition to mediation of tools, the processes of learning/ knowing are also mediated by social and cultural resources which refer to social rules and norms that mediate the relations between a worker and his/ her work community and also the division of labor (this brings into focus the issues of power and authority), which mediates the relationship between community and its activity. The activity theory provides a useful framework to explicate and understand contextual and cultural factors.

Contradictions: The concept of contradictions is powerful in explaining the processes of change and collective development. Activity systems are never free of tensions, and collective development depends on the ways in which people deal with them. System changes through contradictions and inconsistencies (Blackler, 1999; Engestrom, 2001). As Engestrom shows, contradictions are not only inevitable in any dynamic system, but are signs that the system is growing, expanding and evolving. In Engestrom’s terms, a contradiction is a sign of organizational function, not dysfunction (Holt & Morris, 1993). The period of tension and unease is a key element in the cycle of collective development (Blackler et al., 2000).

Contradictions are historically accumulated tensions within/ between elements of the activity system and between interacting activity systems. The recurring challenges and conflicts are manifestations of these historically developed contradictions. Identification of contradictions at the system level is very crucial for an understanding of the system’s challenges and potential for innovations and improvements (Engeström, 1995).

Engeström identified four kinds of contradictions, summarized in the Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: Overview of Contradictions

Contradictions	Description	Illustration w.r.t DEOs
Primary Contradictions	When more than one value systems are attached to an element within the activity system	Recruitment/ posting of DEOs is a technical need for DoE while it may also be an opportunity for political patronage for local politicians
Secondary Contradictions	When a new element is inducted in the existing activity system	Introduction of new power to SMC which will have to be assimilated in the activity system
Tertiary Contradictions	When more advanced element(s) is introduced in the existing activity system for realizing the object	Most of the reform projects try to bring in the elements of more advanced management activity system
Quaternary Contradictions	When advanced activity system gets into contradictions with the adjacent activity systems	Changes in the activity system of the private sector of education may bring some contradictions in the activity system of the public sector of education.

Historicity: Additional insights into the learning processes come from one of the key principles of activity theory – i.e. historicity (Engestrom, 1999). The activities being investigated must be viewed in relation to their evolution/ history. The dynamics of a particular situation can be understood by exploring how it has evolved over a period of time (Jonassen & Roher-Murphy, 1999). The presence of the historical past in any investigation is essential to make visible any changes that may be going on in an activity system. For the purpose of this study, this insight is helpful in tracing back and exploring patterns of learning in the context of public organizations in Pakistan – i.e. exploring how the management practice has evolved in the public sector of Pakistan, and tracing the evolution of public education management within the broader context of political developments in Pakistan.

The Activity theory suggests that knowing/ learning/ doing is achieved through the use and development of the linguistic, material and social resources within particular communities and historical contexts (Blackler et al., 2000). This implies that when using the lens of Activity Theory, knowledge, learning and activity cannot be separated. AT, therefore,

provides a powerful way of analyzing human activity over a period of time, especially, in relation to change.

When people in complex organizations lose sight of the overall activity, they tend to feel disempowered or overwhelmed. Blackler (1999), using activity theoretical concepts, brings in an interesting dimension of ‘organizational forgetfulness’ that results in silence, solitude and disorientation. It is a common observation that public sector organizations are characterized by working in isolation both, at individual and organizational level. Therefore, it is quite interesting to study how this concept (organizational forgetfulness) unfolds in relation to the public sector organization.

The concepts presented above are useful in designing various tools – e.g. interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), observation protocols, document analysis guide, and data generation workshops – so as to investigate Organisational Learning in the present study. These concepts also guide the formulation of subsidiary questions in order to respond to the main research question (these are presented in the Section 2.2).

2.1.2 Rationale for Using Activity Theory

AT, as developed by Engeström (1987), has been employed for organizational analysis by various researchers (see Blackler, 1993, 1995; Blackler et al., 1999; Holt & Morris, 1993; Schultz, 2008). For the purpose of the current study also, the use of AT is relevant and useful. Therefore, following paragraphs describe the analytical and explanatory power of Activity Theory in the exploration of OL within its cultural and historical context (in this case, the public sector of education in Pakistan).

The choice of AT as framework is made because of the various specific methodological and analytical advantages. The *first* advantage is the conception of activity system as a ‘unit of analysis’, which includes as minimum, the object, subject, mediating artifacts, rules, community and division of labor (Engestrom, 1987; Cole & Engestrom, 1993). This expansion of the unit of analysis provides a robust ability to overcome the dichotomy of micro and macro, and enhances the ability to analyze multiple interacting elements. Activity system as unit of analysis calls for complementarities of system’s view and the subject’s view (Engestrom & Miettinen, 1999). This dialectical relationship between the systemic and subjective-partisans builds a collective, multi-voiced construction of situated phenomenon embracing past, present and future zones of proximal development

(Engestrom, 1987). The expanded unit of analysis offers concepts and arguments to capture the complexity of learning processes very well.

Second, the Activity Theory ensures inclusion of context and, therefore, is oriented towards understanding practices, their objects, mediating artifacts and social organizations (Cole & Engestrom, 1993). This proves helpful in terms of explaining the processes of collective learning and development, embedded within its cultural and historical context. It provides AT a unique power to integrate context into an explanatory and analytical framework.

Third, the methodological framework inspired by activity theory is both, systematic (good at creating hard facts) and inherently generative and multi-voiced. Since the activity systems are object-oriented, where the object embodies the meaning and purpose of a collective activity system and is partly given and partly constructed by the subjects (actors engaged in the activity), the construction of object becomes a collaborative and dialogical process, characterized by different perspectives and voices (Engeström, 1999). This is an important feature as it helps to integrate and differentiate ‘voices’ in the organization.

Fourth, the conceptual lens is analytical in capturing the dialectics between individual and organization, between action and thought, between production (transformation) and reproduction (continuity); and it acknowledges the centrality of mediation processes through tools, norms, rules and roles (division of labor), which is helpful in capturing the complexity of the OL phenomenon.

Thus, the activity theory provides an enriching ‘lens’ to explicate and understand contextual and cultural factors, and the role of official policies and individual’s perceptions in carrying out day-to-day work. The theory, no doubt, offers a way of linking events to the contexts in which they occur (Blackler et al., 1999), viewing context as ‘embedded’. Table 2.2 summarises how AT addresses the identified knowledge gaps.

Table 2.2 Use of Activity Theory as a Framework to Address the Knowledge Gaps

Knowledge Gaps	How AT Addresses the Gaps
<p><i>Addressing Knowledge Gap One implies:</i></p> <p>The OL theory needs to be enriched through a nuanced understanding of OL processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historicity - A powerful way of analyzing human activity over a period of time, especially in relation to change and innovation (learning)

Knowledge Gaps	How AT Addresses the Gaps
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conception of activity system as a ‘unit of analysis’ which includes, as minimum, the object, subject, mediating artifacts, rules, community and division of labor – enhances ability to overcome the dichotomy of micro and macro, and analyze multiple interacting elements; thus, offers concepts and arguments to help in capturing the complexity of learning processes
<p><i>Addressing Knowledge Gap Two implies:</i></p> <p>The OL theory needs to be enriched through an enhanced understanding of how power mediates the processes of learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mediation processes are central to the activity theory. How tools, norms and rules mediate the process of collective learning is an important question and provides an analytical lens to capture the nexus between power and collective learning
<p><i>Addressing Knowledge Gap Three implies:</i></p> <p>The OL theory needs to be enriched through gaining a nuanced understanding of the dialectics between context and agency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures inclusion of context and, therefore, is oriented towards understanding practices, their objects, mediating artifacts and social organizations • This proves helpful in terms of explaining the processes of collective learning and development, embedded within its cultural and historical context • Also, see above comments also regarding ability to overcome the dichotomy of micro and macro, and analyze multiple interacting elements

Next, it is important to present the overall research context and the specific research site where the study is situated to understand more meaningfully and comprehensively the relevance and utility of the research methods and tools, and the methodological choices. Section 3.3, therefore, presents details on the research context and site.

2.2 Research Context and Site: The Public Education Sector in Pakistan – District Education Office

The research is carried out in the public sector education in Pakistan. Hence, it is important to understand the context in its depth and breadth so as to make sense of the research findings; this is what the current section attempts to do. Further discussion of the context from the perspective of how management practice has evolved will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Pakistan is the second largest Muslim country in terms of population after Indonesia. The country is a member state of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The other member countries are India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Pakistan is a federation comprising of four federating provinces and two federally administered areas, such as FATA and Gilgit-Baltistan, and it borders with India, Afghanistan and China.

The performance of the country on most of the social development indices is moving downwards. For instance, on the Human Development Index (HDI), which is a summary measure of human development, Pakistan was ranked at 125th out of 169 countries in 2010, while it occupied 145th position out of 189 countries in 2011 (Human Development Reports, 2010, 2011). Similar down slide has been recorded in relation to the organizational/institutional performance vis-à-vis that of other countries' i.e. competitiveness. Pakistan's current (2010-2011) rank for institutions on the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) is 112th out of 139 countries, having fallen behind by 17 places. GCI is the most authoritative ranking of its kind, having been published annually for thirty years by the Geneva-based World Economic Forum, comprising of over 140 specific indicators for measurement.

The overall state of school education in Pakistan is equally a matter of continued concern (e.g. as discussed by Abedi, 1991; Bergman & Mohammad, 1998; Farooq, 1993; Hoodbhoy, 1998; Kizilbash, 1998; Quddus, 1990; Rahman, 2004; Siddiqui, 2007; Warwick & Reimers, 1995). However, before I discuss the concerns regarding educational outcomes, it is important to briefly talk about the overall system of education in Pakistan.

The education system in Pakistan can broadly be described in terms of two main kinds or systems running parallel; these include: the public sector (as the largest provider), and the private sector (as an emerging and rapidly growing phenomenon). The public sector schools follow the local public board of examination and the national educational policy and regulations, which have remained centralized until recently (i.e., until the 18th Constitutional Amendment as a result of which 'education' has been devolved to provinces in place of the

existing arrangement of being a subject in the concurrent list at the federal level. However, at the moment, the amendment has not been fully implemented).

The public sector system of education comprises of the following distinct levels – the Elementary Education (Grades 1-8); the Secondary Education (Grades 9-10), the Higher-Secondary Education (Grades 11-12) and the Higher Education level (Grades 13-16). The current management of public school education is comprised of three levels: federal level, provincial level and district level. Earlier, the higher education and curriculum had been under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government while college education, vocational and technical education is the responsibility of Provincial Governments. However, with 18th Amendment in the National Constitution of 1973, the education has become provincial subject. The District Governments are accountable for primary and secondary (up to grade 10) education (National Commission for Government Reforms, 2008).

The school education is, by and large, managed by the District Education Offices (DEOs) spread across the whole country. Formal rules, impersonal authority, specialization of functions and strong hierarchy - these are the key attributes of DEOs. Within the context of these rules, how DEOs carry out their day-to-day operations becomes an interesting question, and using the lens of Organizational Learning can provide useful insights both, for the DEOs (practice) and for the theory itself (i.e. how the OL theory needs to be developed further).

With an adult literacy rate of 50% only, Pakistan does not fare favorably with other countries having comparable per capita income (Hoodbhoy, 2007). Dropout rates at school level are also quite alarming. Less than 50% of the enrolled students actually manage to complete their primary level education (Khalid & Khan, 2006). Beside other reasons, the present state of school education has its roots in poor management of education and, therefore, under-performing educational managers have been seen as a serious concern in most of the National Education Policies (e.g. NEP 1970, 1972, 1992, 1998-2001). Various initiatives have been taken to reform this situation; yet, little has improved so far (see Memon, 2001; Nayyar & Salim, 2006).

One major explanation of this failure, as I see it (based on more than two decades of my experience in the education/ educational management sector in Pakistan), is an apparent misreading of the situation: *Individual learning* has been considered as a focus of input and interventions instead of learning at the organizational level (system). Thus, so far, I have observed that there has been an over-emphasis (under various reform projects) on individual training of managers rather than building capacity at the organizational level. Developing an organizational focus in management reform agenda is, therefore, a dire need. The Ministry of

Education, Government of Pakistan, in her discussion paper, ‘Vision 2025’, asserts that the overall education system needs to be transformed as learning organization, where each of the three tiers/ levels (district, provincial, national) will be characterized by ‘knowledge based institutions’ (i.e. the District Education Offices being viewed as knowledge based institutions’) – an education system that supports and fosters genuine learning for all children in every classroom (cf. 4.5.1, p.14). This means that analyzing DEOs from the lens of organizational learning is very relevant and quite a timely endeavor – not just for academic gains (theory enrichment), but also for societal relevance (i.e. improving practice). This becomes an interesting case for study particularly since DEOs follow a bureaucratic structure that was introduced during the British colonial rule and still pursue the colonial spirit though more than half century has passed (Ali & Babur, 2010).

As mentioned earlier, under the 18th Amendment in the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan, the subject of education has been devolved from the federal level (as concurrent subject) to the provincial level; this has added additional responsibility to the DEOs. The key features of educational structures can be captured in Figure 2.3 below (presenting a rather simple version of the long hierarchy in the public sector of education, depicted in the official documents).

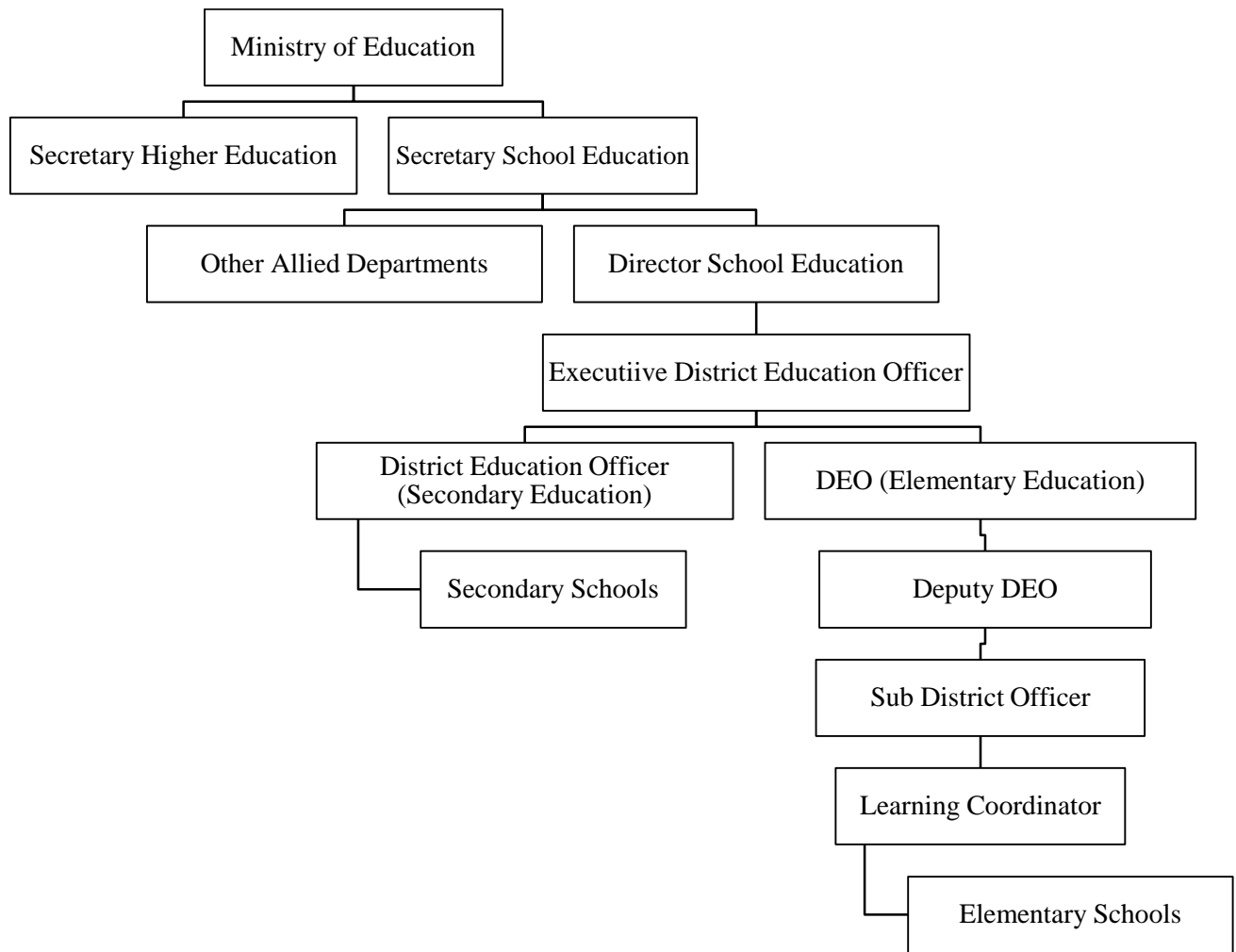


Figure 2.3: Management Structure for School Education in Pakistan

As it is evident from the figure, the DEOs play a crucial role in the provision and management of school education at the district level. With the Devolution Plan (2001), the statute of DEOs has been further enhanced with additional responsibilities of designing educational plans (rather than its earlier role of just implementing the policies) to respond to the local needs. Within this context, where lack of attention to determine the direction and identification of objectives seems a common phenomenon (Khalid & Khan, 2006), it becomes important to explore and understand how DEOs construct their ‘object’ and how local (related to the local context of the organization) and departmental forces mediate this construction.

All the districts in the four provinces of Pakistan (129 districts and 402 sub districts) have comparable structure of DEOs, with similar mandates, as all provinces are governed by the same federal Constitution and Acts (notwithstanding that recently education has become provincial subject). The head of the Education Department in a district is an Executive

District Officer (EDO). The hierarchy, then, runs down to the District Education Officer (usually, separate officers looking after distinct levels, such as elementary and secondary education), Sub-district Education Officer, and Supervisors or Assistant Sub-district Education Officer. At the grassroots level (the union council level), Learning Coordinators (LCs) are appointed to provide academic guidance as well as to supervise the schools under their jurisdiction.

During times of rapid changes at all levels, and when district organizations are either disappearing or getting downsized globally (see Leithwood et al., 1999), there is a huge pressure on the existing education districts to reform themselves. These pressures to reform emanate from multiple sources, ranging from global commitments such as Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) and Education for All (EFA) as well as the local accountability asserted by local politicians and parents alike. The DEOs, being an important locus of educational decision making and implementation, thus, presents themselves as intriguing sites for study of OL.

2.2.1 Description of a Typical District Education Office (DEO)

This description is generally based on my extensive visits to these offices throughout my professional career in the educational management field and work with these offices/officials. If public offices in a district are ranked on the basis of their physical profile, they may be placed at second or third level as compared to the other public service organizations. This could indicate the level of importance *practically* attached to education by the government. DEOs only deal with school education (1-12) in the districts and, as mentioned above, there would be a separate officer for elementary education (1-8) and secondary education (8-12). In most districts, at elementary level, female schools will be looked after by a female officer. The technical, vocational and college education (where applicable) have their own offices in the district.

Typically, a district education office is housed in a big compound with poorly maintained rooms, having large cupboards to store official files. One can easily notice some large noticeboard/s at some prominent place, usually with outdates notices. It is also very likely to notice dumped or discarded resources. One could also find resources, though purchased for distribution (such as books and other learning materials), but dumped in the DEOs instead. Overall, the furniture kept in the DEOs would be made of heavy wood and would mostly be quite uncomfortable. The higher the position of the officer in the

organizational hierarchy is, the better the chances are for them to have better furniture and occupy big offices. Moreover, it is not customary to have some reasonable arrangements for visitors. This is a brief glance at the organizational context for the study (more detailed sketching is carried out in Chapter Three).

This overview of the research context helps in situating the methodological decisions taken to study OL in the public education sector in Pakistan. The next section discusses the methodological choices and decisions with specific reference to the various phases of the research process.

2.3 Phases of Research and Key Methodological Decisions

The study, as discussed, aims to explore, understand, and analyse the phenomenon of organizational learning taking place in the public sector of education in Pakistan. The various phases of the study as well as the related research methods are described below in detail.

The research is conducted in a number of successive phases, each corresponding to a specific research question – these are:

1. Phase I: Cultural-Historical Analysis of the Activity System – Responding to RQ1
2. Phase II: In-depth Analysis of the Case of OL in the Activity System (Case Study) – Responding to RQ2
3. Phase III: Pattern Seeking of OL at Provincial Level – Responding to RQ3
4. Phase IV: Knowledge Contribution of the Study & Implications (Conclusion) – Responding to RQ4

2.3.1 Phase One: Cultural-Historical Analysis of the Activity System

The first phase of the study attempts to carry out a cultural-historical analysis of the activity system under study (i.e. the Management Practice). Since Activity (or Practice) is a historically developed phenomenon, a historical analysis is crucial to make visible the changes that may be taking place within an activity system (Cole, 1996; Engeström, 2001). This implies that in addition to the history of the activity and its objects, the history of the theoretical ideas that have shaped the activity also needs to be analyzed (Engeström, 2001). Therefore, Phase One carries out a brief analysis of the evolution of public management within the context of political developments in Pakistan and the educational management in the public sector more specifically (Chapter 3 presents the findings of Phase One).

Phase One specifically responds to the first subsidiary research question (RQ1) and analyses how the management practice has evolved in the public sector of Pakistan; what the cultural-historical context of public sector management in Pakistan is; and how it has influenced the management practice in public sector of education. It traces the evolution of public education management within the broader context of political developments in Pakistan followed by a macro view of the current situation or context of educational management. The socio-political context is analysed in terms of how it is shaping and is being shaped by the public policy and management in Pakistan.

Table 2.3 below provides a summary of the data sources used to carry out the Cultural-Historical Analysis of the Activity System during Phase One of the study, followed by detailed description.

Table 2.3: Cultural-Historical Analysis of the Activity System and Data Sources – Summary

Corresponding Research Question	Focus of Phase 1	Data Sources
How has management practice evolved in the public sector of Pakistan? What is the cultural-historical context of public sector management in Pakistan, and how has it influenced the management practice in public sector of education?	<p>Cultural-historical analysis of public management in Pakistan</p> <p>Analysis of public management of education in Pakistan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy review and analysis • Secondary Data - Scholarly work done both by national and international scholars • Individual Interviews of the Key Stakeholders drawn from across the country • References to available empirical work are also made

Cultural-Historical Analysis of Public Management in Pakistan

From the lens of the Activity Theory, historical analysis is very significant so as to generate insights regarding how and, if at all, the object of the district education activity system has evolved (and transformed) over a period of time. To help in developing a historical contextual perspective on the district education management system in Pakistan, the following questions (see Box 2.1) guide the analysis:

Box 2.1: Questions Guiding the Cultural-Historical Analysis

- How has the management practice evolved in the public sector of Pakistan? What were the key phases in the evolution of the activity system?
- What were the key influences or forces (favorable and opposing) that brought about the change?
- How, if at all, have the tools (both conceptual and material) of district education activity system modified?
- What is the cultural-historical context of public sector management in Pakistan? How has it influenced the management practice in public sector of education?

Therefore, historical analysis is carried out at the very beginning of the study through identification and review of relevant literature. Using the lens of activity theory, these documents or artifacts illuminate the processes of ‘object’ construction, and help in indicating the mediation processes by rules and roles (division of labor) within the context of district educational departments. In addition, these documents or artifacts also help in the identification and refinement of research tools, such as semi-structured interviews and observation schedules. Two distinct sources are used:

- a) *Policy Review*: Detailed review of education (and its management) policies and related documents regarding the management of education is carried out, tracing through history how different policies have conceptualized education management. For instance, key national policy documents, plans of action, educational reforms projects’ proposals, strategy papers on sector reforms, policy papers (e.g. White Paper), policy review papers, etc. are looked at (cf. bibliography). The various policies and planning documents are analysed to understand the ‘official’ construction of the ‘Object’ of the activity system i.e. to understand how educational management or school management has been conceptualized and defined officially (from a policy perspective) – as ‘the Given Object’. The policy analysis also looks at the various issues and challenges and key policy shifts.
- b) *Analysis of Empirical Studies*: It is not an easy task to construct history and for various reasons – history may not be well-documented; especially in a developing country’s

context and particularly Asian context where oral culture is strong, documentation is not so rigorous or systematic. Moreover, history is a matter of interpretation, and interpretations may be incomplete, biased, loop-sided, or there may be multiple interpretations available. Therefore, in order to enrich the above analysis, empirical work is also analysed to get not only enriched and deeper insights, but to also have more evidence-based view of the situation. Therefore, research papers related to educational management in Pakistan in general and district education management (especially in Sindh) are reviewed. To ensure that quality research is looked at, only research published in authentic, well-reputed books or journals is considered. The detailed list of documents is part of the references.

Thus, the use of a rigorous analysis framework as well as multiple sources of evidence (e.g. policy reviews as well as empirical sources) helps in ensuring validity and reliability.

Analysis of Public Management of Education in Pakistan

After understanding the management practice in its historical context, it becomes important to gain an understanding of the current context of the public education management in Pakistan. For this purpose, individual interviews are conducted with the key stakeholders in relation to education management in Pakistan in general and Sindh in particular. The interviews that cover the range of views and experiences of the target groups are sometimes referred to as ‘purposive sampling’ (Yin 1994). These stakeholders include:

- Policy makers,
- Key Decision makers,
- Educational Officials,
- Senior Researchers,
- Senior Bureaucrats
- INGO Educational Representatives,
- Public Education Sector Section Officers,
- Public Sector Officers, and
- Some other similar categories.

In all, 15 interviews have been conducted, summarized in the Table 2.4 below.

Table 2.4: Overview of Individual Interviews during Phase One

S. No.	Respondents	Level of Experience/ Work
1	Senior Education Specialist, INGO	National level
2	Very Senior Govt. Official from Education sector	Provincial level (Sindh)
3	Govt. Official from Education sector (decade longer civil service)	Provincial level (Sindh)
4	Public Sector employee – senior/ experienced (scientific researcher)	Federal level
5	Senior Education Specialist, INGO	Provincial level
6	Senior Govt. Official from Education sector	Provincial level/ Sindh
7	Senior Research & M&E Expert, worked in education sector for nearly 2 decades	Provincial level
8	Strategic Planning Director, INGOs, Extensive experience of donor-educational projects	National level
9	Senior INGO educational representative	National level
10	Section Officer, Education	Provincial level/ Sindh
11	Educational Assessment Consultant, with Govt.	Provincial level/ Sindh

Since these key officials have had experiences of working at a macro level (both, national and provincial level) – of policy making, decision making or policy implementation – on a number of key positions, the interviews not only provide a macro perspective but, as a consequence, also become embedded in a policy perspective. Moreover, since these stakeholders have had *extensive* experiences of working on key positions, they also embody historical perspective in their view (as it reflects in their comments).

The semi-structured individual interviews, therefore, focus on understanding the macro view of education management in Pakistan through the eyes and perspectives of these key individuals – a variety of stakeholder interviews also cross validates findings generated by each individual interviewee. The main emphasis of these individual interviews is to get their insights on for instance, understanding district education offices as public sector organisations, their key characteristics, the key changes and evolutions as well as the key

influences, the systems learning over a period of time, etc. The detailed Interview Guides for the different categories of interviewees/ respondents mentioned above are provided as Appendix ‘A’. For respondents at a senior/ higher level of policy and planning, Macro Level Interview Guide is used, whereas, for middle managers/ district level officials/ personnel, Meso Level Interview Guide is used.

During individual interviews and informal conversations with the research participants at all these levels, the participants have specifically been asked to share their images and metaphors for describing educational management in the public sector i.e. their actual images of district education management. A metaphor has immense potential to capture the mental images of the subjects (using the terminology of activity theory), which describe how things work from their perspective. The participants have also been requested to explain their metaphors. These metaphors are also used later for the thematic organization of the field data and document analysis. Retrospectively, the most powerful dimension of the individual interviews has been to seek the key officials’ description of the district education offices through metaphors, which has resulted in very powerful description of these offices.

That the research evidence has been gathered through consulting a wide variety of research participants at all levels of policy planning and implementation, using a variety of authentic tools to generate in-depth insights (e.g. metaphors), and that the tools are described here in detail (e.g. the appended interview guide) – these steps help in ensuring validity and reliability.

2.3.2 Phase Two: In-depth Analysis of the Case of OL in the Activity System (Case Study)

The Phase Two responds to the RQ2 i.e. how the education management practice has evolved and enacted in a selected district of Sindh. In order to generate deeper and holistic insights regarding the activity system (the Management Practice), an in-depth study of the case of the district education management is carried out in one of the districts of province Sindh (Pakistan), using Activity Theory as a framework of analysis. ‘Sindbad’ is used as a pseudonym for the district as well as the town under study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of Phase Two.

Rationale for the Case Study

A sociological and qualitative approach to inquiry is able to capture the social realities that ‘defy quantification and objectification’ (Hall and Midgeley, 1988, p.4). In more specific

terms, it implies that the study of the phenomenon of learning should take place within the context in which it occurs; this makes Case Study as a relevant and pertinent research approach for studying OL (see Weerd-Nederhof, et al., 2002). The usefulness of the case study design for theory construction and policy analysis is well-established (e.g. see Hamel, Dufour & Fortin, 1993), and so is the need for exploratory empirical research to conceptualize organizational learning (see Lahteenmaki et al., 2001). These assertions, thus, justify the use of exploratory case study design as an appropriate method for this inquiry.

Analytical Framework for In-depth Study

The in-depth study of the case of district education management practice is guided by questions (listed in Box 2.2) that are developed on the basis of the discussion on Activity Theory in Section 2.3. The discussion highlights important notions/ principles of the AT; these include: Object’ – both as given and as perceived (see Q.1, Box 2.2); ‘Contradictions’ – as collective development – as well as historicity (see Q.2, Box 2.2), and mediations (see Q.3 & Q.4, Box 2.2), dialectics between agency and context (see Q.5, Box 2.2).

Box 2.2: Guiding Questions for Case Study of OL

1. How is the object of managing school education constructed and contested by district educational managers?
2. What are the contradictions and dilemmas in the activity system, and how are they resolved?
How has the activity system (practice) evolved over a period of time?
3. How do the organizational artifacts (linguistic and material) mediate the processes of organizational learning?
4. How do the organizational rules and norms mediate the process of collective learning?
5. What are the linkages between individual and organizational learning? How are individuals’ actions and collective activity aligned with each other?

These questions guide the development of the tools for data generation for in-depth study of the case of OL in the public education sector in Pakistan (Sindh).

Case Study – Selection Criteria

The detailed historical analysis and macro view of the overall scenario of public sector education in Chapter 3, especially, its deterioration over a period of time, suggests that the district education offices are not very distinctly different from each other – there is not much difference to be seen when it comes to their performance and especially their performance in relation to educational indicators. Moreover, since the current study looks at the OL processes from the Activity Theory's perspective which does not define OL as necessarily linked to 'improved' practice or 'positive' learning outcomes, it does not matter whether the selection of the district for case study is based on an 'effective' districts or 'ineffective' ones (i.e. in terms of their performance against the key education indicators). Therefore, the current study selects a district education office on the basis of 'access' as *main* criterion, especially, in the context of public sector in Pakistan, where there are many gatekeepers to block access to data for various reasons that the present study reveals in much detail later. Some other 'additional' considerations are also discussed in the following lines.

The selected district, additionally, also represents diversity – it is a case of a semi-urban context, with huge physical infrastructure, and managers who have received professional development during reform projects. Moreover, the current district education manager or officer has also remained on this position for quite some time; and this longevity of service/ experience is an important consideration from the perspective of the Activity Theory – i.e. in terms of understanding the activity system in its historical context, for which organisational memory (generally stored in people, processes/ procedures, systems and documents) needs to be accessed in some form. Therefore, as being the long-serving management personnel, the district education officer is considered as helpful in providing relevant historical insights. Moreover, the fact that the officer is quite accessible and friendly helps in improved access to data and findings. Of course, my familiarity with DEDs serves as an added advantage in the design and conduct of the case study. Miles and Huberman (1994) have noted the crucial relevance of researcher's skills and familiarity with the context while conducting case study as these contribute towards the validity of the study.

Having discussed the criteria for selection of the District Education Office, the following paragraphs provide details on the methods, tools and sources (and their selection criteria).

Semi-structured Interviews

As the study intends to explore and examine organizational learning processes in the district education department e.g. the interplay of context, power and multi-voiced reality of organizational life, in-depth interview is a suitable method (Mason, 1996) for such exploration and analysis. Moreover, given the need to ‘generate’ data (as opposed to merely ‘collecting’ data) and focus on understanding the issues, semi-structured in-depth interviews (instead of the structured ones) are used; especially, since the semi-structured interviews are very helpful in probing into the undiscovered and unexplored areas of organizational learning (see Beer & Spector, 1993). Interview design is kept as flexible, iterative, and continuous; the continuous nature of the interviewing process warrants that the questioning is redesigned throughout the project (Rubin & Rubin 1995). In-depth interviews are conducted with the key stakeholders in relation to the district education office/ management practice; for instance, the district and field managers (DEO, DDEO, ADO, others), the head of the clerk association, the school head. The interview is guided by the analysis framework given in Box 3.3 (see Interview Guide attached as Appendix ‘A’). The relevant details are summarized as Table 3.4. The interview data is, later, coded, categorized and analyzed.

Data Generation Workshops and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

While individual interviews provide opportunity to gain individual’s perspectives in relation to OL, in order to gain a cross sectional view, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and data generation workshops are conducted with various similar groups within the organisation; for instance, with the district and field managers (DEOs, DDEOs, ADOs) and school heads. Guided by key questions, both these methods not only provide a horizontal view of the situation, but also facilitate in collective meaning making. The participation of large groups of individuals at the workshop and FGDs ensures that the contribution is enriched through refuting and/or extending ideas discussed in/ by the group. The group discussion, thus, helps in gaining enriched insights. Further details regarding the workshops and FGDs are summarized as Table 3.4. The details of what a typical data generation workshop includes (i.e. its agenda or detailed plan) are attached as Appendix ‘A’. The data generated through workshop and FGDs are, later, coded, categorized and analyzed.

Field Notes

Besides interview, extensive field notes are also maintained throughout the case study period for the field visits and conversations. Field notes are particularly helpful in triangulating the

data and drawing conclusions from the data. Informal conversations are also documented for further reflections later.

The field notes, for instance, document the physical description of the district management offices (including the physical infrastructure, the size and condition of the building, the availability and condition/ maintenance of the physical resources), the number of human resource (staff, officers), the formal/ informal meetings taking place at the office, the informal conversations and interactions (between and among staff, staff and officers, staff/ officers and visitors/ clients), the overall emotional environment, the norms and values, and other such observations that are important for an in-depth understanding of the management practice embedded in the context. The relevant details are summarized as Table 2.5. The field notes are, later, coded, categorized and analyzed.

Document Analysis

A wide range of documents on education are available; most of these documents and reports have been produced by donors and/ or commissioned by them under the education reform projects. There is a need to juxtapose ‘actions’ with the ‘accounts of actions’ (see Abell & Gilbert, 1983). For the current study, therefore, the relevant documents are continuously browsed through and reviewed so as to develop a ‘lens’ for the action and also to review and reflect on actions.

The public documents are accessed through the website and/ or borrowed from different colleagues, as there is no centralized repository of these documents within the department of education. The documents include, for example, the annual development plans, Education Management Information System (EMIS) reports, annual budget, government notifications, supervision policy and procedures, staff development policies and reports generated for upward communication. The reports produced by donor funded projects also serve as another important source. An extensive review of relevant documents (artifacts/ tools) is carried out in order to understand the mediation processes in the construction of object and in carrying out activities in the system.

Table 2.5: Overview of Research Methods, Tools and Participants for the Case Study

Method/ Tool	Purpose	Participants	Setting, Duration/ Count, Other Details
Individual	For in-depth	• EDO	30- 45 minutes each

Method/ Tool	Purpose	Participants	Setting, Duration/ Count, Other Details
Interviews (Interview Guide – Appendix A)	exploration of the case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEO • DDO • District Local Politician • President – All Pakistan Clerk Association • TE College principal 	Individual Interviews are conducted in the offices of the respective respondents. Due to the nature of context, the recording of the interviews has not been possible. One experienced researcher has been hired for note-taking.
Focus Group Discussion (FGDs)	For collective meaning making (i.e. co-construction of argument)	ADOs/ SPEs (Supervisors), local leadership of Teachers Association	60- 75 minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two FGDs of ADOs/ SPEs (12 participants : 5 and 7) • One FGD with Teachers Association (5 participants) • The venue of the FGDs was one big room (office of the EDO) • The EDO was not in the office while FGDs were conducted
Data Generation Workshop (Workshop guide – Appendix A)	To provide cross sectional view and for collective meaning making (i.e. co-construction of argument)	Various like groups within the organisation: e.g. District and Field Managers (DEOs, DDEOs, ADOs), School Heads, Supervisors	4 hours (excluding snack-break) 24 have participated in the workshop Random representation from the province that covers 40% of the total districts

Method/ Tool	Purpose	Participants	Setting, Duration/ Count, Other Details
Field Observations – Appendix A	Triangulation of the data based on field observations and recording/ documenting on- going insights and conclusions	District Education Office	<p>Ranging between 2- 4 hours for each visit 10 field visits have been made</p> <p>The site of the District Education Office in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical description of the district management offices (including the physical infrastructure, the size and condition of the building, the availability and condition/ maintenance of the physical resources), • Number of human resource (staff, officers), • Formal/ informal meetings taking place at the office, • Informal conversations and interactions (between and among staff, staff and officers, staff/ officers and visitors/ clients), • Overall emotional environment, the norms and value • Etc.
<i>Document Analysis</i>	For substantiation and triangulation of data (and to gather detailed additional information)	NA	<p>All the relevant documents have been studied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMIS Reports • Annual budget • Government notifications • Supervision policy and procedures (e.g. school visit performa, school visit reports) • Leave application form

The methods and tools employed for the in-depth study include triangulation of the following kinds: Triangulation of methods and tools (e.g. semi-structured interviews, data generation workshops, field notes, document analysis and relevant guides/ tools) and sources (e.g. wide range of documents, participation of all the important stakeholders in the process from higher levels to lower levels of hierarchy). Such triangulation is helpful in ensuring valid and reliable findings.

2.3.3 Phase Three: Pattern Seeking of OL at Provincial Level

The Phase Three responds to the RQ3, ‘Does the management practice in one district have similar pattern/ resonance in other districts in the province (Sindh), too?’ It is important for the current study to understand how far the findings generated by the case study are applicable more generally/ at a larger scale, that is, whether these findings are similar/ different for the other district education offices in the province (Sindh). Chapter 7 presents the findings of Phase Three.

For this purpose, generally, large scale surveys are conducted. However, I use instead a very exciting window of opportunity i.e. Data Generation Workshops, which I describe in more details later. Due to the nature of my work, i.e. conducting professional development programmes for educators, educational leaders and managers, I usually get to interact with a large number of educational managers across the province (Sindh), which allows me the opportunity to conduct these workshops, which is advantageous in a number of ways – *first*, accessing such large number of district education managers (representing 40% of the districts) at one place is a rare opportunity. *Second*, the opportunity involves face-to-face interactions in place of interactions mediated through a survey tool (generally used for a large scale data generation). *Third*, in place of large scale quantitative data, it allows an opportunity for large scale qualitative insights. *Fourth*, since many Asian countries (including Pakistan) generally have an oral culture, where writing is not viewed as a desirable task especially in the public sector context, the government officials also generally hesitate in giving out something in writing. Hence, face-to-face interactions can yield more effective results than questionnaire administration; moreover, there are various other issues related to the conduct of survey research in such contexts e.g. Mohammad et al (2011) highlight the challenges of conducting surveys in South as limited turnout, incomplete forms, incorrect information or delegating the task to their peons or colleagues instead of doing it themselves.

Hence, the available window of opportunity is used to access large scale perspectives, using qualitative tools. Further details of the workshops follow.

Data Generation Workshops

A number of Data Generation Workshops have been conducted during the course of the study. The participants of the workshops include District Education Officers (DEOs), Deputy District Education Officers (DDEOs), Assistant District Officers (ADOs), Supervisors,

Teachers/ Teacher Trainers and School Heads across the province. A Data Generation Workshop typically includes a group of 20-25 participants/ respondents, where they are seated in a way that they can comfortably engage in individual response or group response (through group work/ discussion). The workshop has been conducted and facilitated by me, where each workshop has concluded on reflective comments/ critique of the data generated.

As discussed in Section 2.3, activity is the minimum ‘unit of analysis’ which includes, the object, subject, mediating artifacts, rules, community and division of labor (Engeström, 1987; Cole & Engeström, 1993). The activity as unit of analysis implies that the tools used for the investigation of an activity system must take into account the construction of the object of the activity system, artefacts (both symbolic and practical) mediating actions of the subjects, the rules (both formal and informal) influencing subjects and the perceived and enacted roles of the subjects in the activity system. In other words, the tools must explore, examine and investigate the competing perspectives and experiences of the subjects/ actors in relation to the construction/ realization of the object of the activity system.

Therefore, to seek pattern and ‘resonance’ of the findings generated from the in-depth case study (i.e. how the object is constructed – understood and enacted), the following tools are employed for such investigation. The tools include: Organisational Images/ Visual Metaphors; Organisational Roles; Organisational Discourse; and Organisational Narratives/ Experiences. Retrospectively, these tools have proved to be sufficient for investigating the competing perspectives and experiences of the subjects/ actors in realization of the object of the activity system. While designing these tools, cross validation or triangulation is kept as an important consideration. Basically, these are two kinds of tools – to be filled individually and to be filled with a group. Table 2.6 below provides an overview of the focus of the tools and their expected outcomes.

Table 2.6: Tools for Phase Three – Focus and Outcomes

Tools	Primary Focus	Respondent (Individual/ Group)	Yield/ Outcomes
Organisational Images/ Visual Metaphors	Mental models (mediating artefacts) regarding the activity system	Individual	Insights about how object is understood

Tools	Primary Focus	Respondent (Individual/ Group)	Yield/ Outcomes
Organisational Roles	Perceptions about roles and challenges (division of labor)	Individual	Insights about how object is understood and enacted
Organisational Discourse	Organizational experiences	Individual	Multi-voicedness in the enactment of the object
Organisational Narratives/ Experiences	Organizational experiences	Group/ Collective	Insights about relational enactment of the object

Some additional comments, rooted in the usage/ relevance of the tools in the organizational studies, are also offered in the following paragraphs.

Analysis of Organisational Images: The literature available that discusses organization and management theory using insights from metaphors is quite substantial. For example, see Alvesson (1993), Beyer (1992), Boroditsky (2000), Cornelissen (2005), Gherardi (2000), Holyoak and Thagard (1997), Grant and Oswick (1996), McClintock et al. (2004), Morgan (1980, 1983, 1996), Oswick et al. (2002), Sackmann (1989) and Tsoukas (1991, 1993, 2009). Though some scholars have also critiqued the use of metaphors in organizational theory as, for instance, promoting ‘social partisanship’ (Tinker, 1986), which in ‘positive’ terms can be understood as ‘competing perspectives’ or multi-voiced-ness – this is the very reason why the use of ‘Metaphor/ Image’ analysis as an approach becomes very relevant for the purpose of the current study since my research interest lies in exploring multi-voiced-ness.

The effectiveness of metaphors in exploring and explicating the existing knowledge is quite well-established (see Lakoff and Johnson, 2008; Oswick, Keenoy and Grant, 2002). Metaphors can help in identifying ‘different schools of thoughts’ within a paradigm (see Morgan, 1980). As metaphors connect what is already known to ‘new’ domains, they are, thus, very generative tools to help understand the social contexts (Jensen, 2008) of the study and, therefore, their use for the purpose of current study can help in generating rich data to seek resonance and understand patterns. Furthermore, the significant role of metaphors in

understanding organization and management can be understood through Morgan's (2006) comments made while introducing his seminal work, 'Images of Organization':

It is based on a very simple premise: that all theories of organization and management are based on implicit images or metaphors that lead us to see, understand, and manage organizations in distinctive yet partial ways. (p.4)

Morgan's argument for relevance of metaphors in the organizational context gets further extended when Goatly (2007) asserts that we interact (i.e. understand and act) with the world rather through metaphorical models. Given this rationale and significance associated with the use of metaphors for enriched data generation in an organisational context, the current study collects and analyses the images of 'Management' held by the educational managers. Their images are elicited through a task, where the field based managers are asked (see Box 2.3):

Box 2.3: Metaphors – Task Description

'What comes to your mind when you think of 'Management' (district education)? Please draw/sketch your image on the blank paper.'

The tool is used to access their images (their mental models) and to elicit their perceptions (reflective of their experiences and interpretations of these experiences) of management – e.g. in terms of the key aspects, dimensions or functions of management; the key stakeholders and their relative significance of each in the educational process. My assumption is that an analysis of their perceptions helps in providing insights regarding how they view the role of the district education offices in the educational management – i.e. their conception of the object of the activity system, the school management.

Analysis of Organisational Roles: Organisational roles and the key stakeholders' perceptions of their roles is an important lens to analyze the activity systems i.e. what the role perceptions of key actors (in this case, district managers) are, how they perceive them and, as a consequence, enact their roles. It is important to explore how the education managers refer to their experiences and/ or describe their roles; how they define the nature and scope of their work; and what they identify as the major challenges or constraints of their situation. During the data generation workshops, when the district education managers are asked about having

seen their TORs document, the majority of their responses is negative (many have not been aware if such document even existed; some mentioned that during one of the educational reform projects, and as part of management reforms, some such efforts have been done, but then these have remained as an isolated work – they have not been able to recall anything from that exercise).

Given this backdrop, in order to understand the managers' role perceptions, a very simple yet powerful tool is used during data generation workshops to elicit their responses. The district education managers (DEOs and ADOs) are asked (as an individual task) to respond to the following two questions (see Box 2.4):

Box 2.4: Organisational Roles – Task Description

Q.1. Which aspects of your job do you like the most?

Q.2. What are the challenges faced by you in your job/ in the dispensation of your duties?

Broadly speaking, these questions are helpful in understanding their aspirations and motives (even, in case of Q.2, through the lens of their perceived constraints situated in their experiences).

Analysis of Organisational Discourse: The analysis of work-related discourse, within the activity theory framework, provides a rich and innovative way of conceptualizing and understanding the activity systems (Leadbetter, 2004). Analysis of the dominant discourse at the organisational level offers insights in terms of, for example, what the discourse reveals about the organisational culture, its main attentions and tensions, role perceptions – revealing also how the very object of the activity system is perceived by some of the key stakeholders. For the discourse analysis, a very powerful tool is used during the data generation workshops with the district education managers (DEO/ ADOs): They are asked to state (as individual task) the most Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) or Frequently Used Statements (FUS) that they receive from different groups of stakeholders – e.g.

- What do the Politicians ask from/ say to the District Educational Managers?
- What do the Higher Authorities ask from/ say to the District Educational Managers?
- What do the School Heads ask from/ say to the District Educational Managers?

- What does the Community ask from/ say to the District Educational Managers?

The tool is used with the assumption that the analysis of the discourse directed at the district education managers can provide interesting insights in relation to the expectations of the different stakeholders from the district education offices – which can be reflective of not just their desires, but also of the existing practice. The tool has the potential to allow access to common or prevailing discourse and the current locus and focus of attention.

In what the district education managers are asked by the different key stakeholders, the direction of the discourse is – from key stakeholders to district managers. In order to understand the discourse directed from district education managers to/ at the head teachers and teachers (in this case, teacher trainers), the school heads and teacher trainers (as key stakeholders at the level of school – the very object of activity system) are also asked to state the most frequently asked questions or frequent statements on part of the district education managers.

Analysis of Organisational Narratives: Narratives are important processual and temporal devices for humans with which to interpret and make sense of their own and other peoples' actions and intentions (Czarniawska, 2014). While highlighting the value of narrative data, Stuart (2012) asserts that narratives provide access to the social, cultural and historical meanings that the research participants place on events in their lives. The interpretation of these narratives is based in the paradigm of experience-centered narrative research (Squire, 2009). This approach to narrative analysis is preferred over event-centered approach, which is primarily focused on the sequence of events in the narratives, and also over 'discourse-centered' approach (Foucault, 1980) that puts emphasis on the power revealed by the language of the narrative. The rationale of this preference is rooted in the centrality of situational experience (Denning, 2007, p. 178; Squire, 2009, p. 42) in the experience-centered narrative research. Experience-centered narrative research focuses on the development of individuals' meaning and how conflicts are resolved – i.e. 'outcomes of a narrative' (Mishler, 1991); the processes involved are described below.

Box 2.5: Experience-Centered Narrative Analysis: Processes

- The dialogic/ reflective process of constructing a picture story adds layers of meaning – because of

the process involved, the tool has a higher yield as compared to interviews

- The format of picture stories facilitates sharing of the story with the whole group in turn
- The participants are invited to comment on their own narratives; this helps in generating themes of the narrative data (which allows for multiple interpretations and researchers' reflexivity, as proposed by Squire, 2009, p. 51).
- The participants ask questions, challenge as well as offer alternative interpretations; in fact, in some cases, the stories also evoke emotional responses (e.g. those of happiness or anger).
- The collective reflections/ dialogue facilitate the development of 'key themes' which are captured on the white board.
- The synthesis or discussion of these stories is carried out using Activity Theory's concepts, such as contradictions or discontinuities.
- The picture stories, developed in small groups, emerge as representations of collective experiences; their presentation to larger group ensures 'empathetic validity' (Stuart, 2012) of these narratives

Given the significance of the processes involved, during the interactive data generation workshops with the educational managers (both field based and school based), data about management practices are elicited through an innovative approach of storytelling using pictures, which is a group task (see Box 2.6).

Box 2.6: Organisational Narratives (Picture Story) – Task Description

The task is a group task that includes: cutting out interesting/ meaningful/ relevant pictures from the newspapers and magazines (which are provided to them in abundance); selecting and pasting pictures on a given blank pages to develop a story of management of schools; and presenting it to the whole group. One of the prerequisites of the story-telling activity is to weave into their narratives all the relevant stakeholders; they have to necessary pick one character from the school (i.e. a Head Teacher, teacher, etc.), and one character from the district education office (i.e. DEOs, etc.). Students, parents and the community are to be depicted as complementary characters. It is indicated

to them that a positive ending to the stories is preferable.

The activity is carried out to allow the educational managers to weave their professional experiences, aspirations and impressions into stories relevant to their professional lives. The purpose of this activity is to get insights into the school management through exploring mental images, generalizations and dynamics of relations as experienced and perceived. These characters and their positioning in the stories allow the participants to determine the influence and position of these stakeholders in their professional lives. The narratives are useful tools as they can provide useful insights in relation to the authority structures, the influential people within and outside the educational system, the key attentions and tensions in the system, the challenges and difficulties faced by them on day-to-day basis, their perceptions about their own role in school improvement and their position, sense of power or powerlessness, contradiction in the system and the way these get resolved, etc. The respondents/ participants are asked to necessarily end their stories on a positive note so as to allow insights into how the contradictions in the systems can possibly get resolved, as perceived by the people around which these narratives revolve.

Typically, a Data Generation Workshop would follow the same format: Initially, the participants are asked to record their responses on the tool individually and, then, a follow-up discussion is carried out to develop shared meaning of the data. The details about these workshops are presented in the Table 2.7.

Table 2.7: Details of Data Generation Workshops (Phase II)

Participants	Focus	Duration	No of participants	Workshop	Coverage
District and Field Managers (DEOs, DDEOs, ADOs)	(Re) constructing and interpreting picture stories	4 hours (excluding snacks break)	20-25 participants in each workshop	2 workshops	Random representation from the province that covered 40% of the total districts
District and	Analysis of	4 hours	20-25	2 workshops	Random

Participants	Focus	Duration	No of participants	Workshop	Coverage
Field Managers (DEOs, DDEOs, ADOs)	Organisational Images/ Roles/ Discourse	(excluding snacks break)	participants in each workshop		representation from the province that covered 40% of the total districts
School Heads	(Re) constructing and interpreting picture stories.	4 hours (excluding snacks break)	20-25 participants in each workshop	2 workshops	Random representation from the province that covered 40% of the total districts
School Heads	Analysis of Organisational Roles/ Discourse	4 hours (excluding snacks break)	20-25 participants in each workshop	2 workshops	Random representation from the province that covered 40% of the total districts

The use of multiple tools (e.g. Organisational Images/ Visual Metaphors, Organisational Roles, Organisational Discourse and Organisational Narratives/ Experiences), their detailed explication and their administration with reference to a variety of research participants/ key stakeholders ensures triangulation and, therefore, helps in ensuring reliability and validity.

Researcher's Extensive Experience of Working with DEOs

In addition to the methods and tools discussed above, researcher's extensive and rich professional experiences and reflections, spread over more than two decades of working on capacity building initiatives for public sector education service in Pakistan, is an added advantage and value addition. It is helpful in not only deepening insights, but expanding

them, too. In order to address the possible researcher's bias (being too close to the system/subject under study), I use conscious strategies, such as, writing my reflections systematically and then looking back at it to see if there is sufficient evidence to support the conclusions I reach or if there could be another perspective on it or other way to look at it. Another conscious strategy is to have systematic, regular and rigorous discussions with colleagues on the findings and conclusions to get an external view or perspective.

2.3.4. Phase Four: Knowledge Contribution of the Study and Implications (Conclusions)

Phase Four responds to RQ4, 'What are the insights for developing the OL theory, and what are the implications for improving management practice in similar contexts?' The response to this question is provided through pulling together and synthesizing the overall analysis and discussion so to understand the overall insights in relation to Organisational Learning in the context of public sector education system in Pakistan (Sindh). The synthesis is carried out using Activity Theory as the conceptual framework – i.e. in terms of the following specific questions that the present study explored:

- How is the object of managing school education constructed and contested by district educational managers?
- What are the contradictions and dilemmas in the activity system, and how are they resolved? How has the activity system (practice) evolved over a period of time?
- How do organizational artifacts – linguistic and material – mediate the processes of organizational learning?
- What are the linkages between individual and organisational learning? How are individuals' actions and collective activity aligned with each other?
- How do organisational rules and norms mediate the process of collective learning?

The Chapters Six and Seven present the overall synthesis and key conclusions of the study in terms of its Knowledge Contribution (OL Theory and AT) as well as Implications (e.g. for policy, practice and research). The synthesis of the overall analysis and discussion is presented in Chapter Six, followed by the overall Conclusion and Knowledge Contribution of the present study in the subsequent chapter (Chapter Seven).

2.4 Role of Researcher – 'Embeddedness' and Distance (Objectivity)

Within constructivist stance/ paradigm for reality of the social phenomenon (in this case, organizational learning in the public sector), the role of the researcher is very critical, yet, it is generally taken for granted (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) have asserted that participant observation (i.e. the active role of researcher) is central to all social research. This implies that researcher cannot be considered as outside of the social phenomenon being studied. However, this does not mean that the findings are the construction of the researcher. The position of the researcher is best described as that of a ‘subtle realist’ position, as outlined by Hammerlsey (1992). The ‘subtle realist’ position acknowledges that the social phenomenon though depends upon multiple social actors, yet exists independently of the researcher. This position allows the researcher, using adequate tools, to study the phenomenon and produce valid and trustworthy knowledge claims. In the following lines, therefore, I have briefly described my association with the social actors and the phenomenon so as to situate the findings of the study, discuss how the researcher ‘embeddedness’ generated rich and deeper insights and at the same time, how distance and objectivity were maintained throughout the course of the study.

The researcher has worked in the public sector of education for more than a decade. Besides working in the public schools, the researcher has also had the opportunity to work in the provincial organization responsible for staff development, which included the capacity building of district education officers. The assignment of capacity building of the education officers (that involved need analysis as an integral part) has helped in so many ways in developing an analytical lens to understand how the district education officers and offices work. In addition to the above, my responsibilities in various education reform projects included the overall monitoring of the impact of the reform initiatives, which again helped in nurturing further the evaluative/ analytical lens t look at the DEOs. Overall, my work in the public sector helped me to understand the organisational discourse (a long list of acronyms), official rules, procedures and norms that could, otherwise, have been a great challenge in conducting the present study. The social scientists mostly acknowledge the value and challenges of being an ‘insider’ as a researcher (see Chavez, 2008).

After nearly a decade of work as part of the public sector, I moved to a private university located in a different province, which has been heavily engaged with the public sector educational development. This relocation to a different sector and a different province allowed me an opportunity for developing a relatively ‘distanced’ view to what happens in the public sector and also ‘comparative’ insights through reflecting back on my earlier experiences of working within the public sector. Working in academia strengthened and

deepened my existing engagement with the phenomenon of learning: What does it really mean at different levels, and how does it take place? Consequently, I became a keen reader of learning theories, an additional dimension to my professional interests, that helped me to develop a more self-reflexive orientation, which guarded against researcher's personal biases that are generally considered as the potential pitfalls of being an insider (Greene, 2014), and ensuring that I take nothing for granted (see Hammersley, 2002).

Thus, the researcher's extensive and rich professional experiences and reflections, spread over more than two decades of working on the capacity building initiatives for public sector education in Pakistan, is an added advantage and a value addition. It is helpful in not only deepening insights, but expanding them, too. However, in order to address the possible researcher's bias (being too close to the system/ subject under study), I make use of conscious strategies, such as, writing my reflections systematically and then looking back at it to see if there is sufficient evidence to support the conclusions I reach or if there could be another perspective on it or other way to look at it. Another conscious strategy is to have systematic, regular and rigorous discussions with colleagues on the findings and conclusions to get an external view or perspective (and, thus, reduce researcher's bias).

Furthermore, the overall considerations for ensuring reliability and validity are also discussed here to highlight the nature of the systematic procedure and rigor involved in the design and conduct of the study. For instance, the very detailed and explicit description of the methodology and data collection tools above as well as the in-depth discussion of analytical lens (see Activity Theory described in Section 2.3) helps in ensuring reliability.

The present study is, furthermore, informed by Morgan's (1997) advice on validity – i.e. describing validity as 'resonance' and 'pattern seeking'. Resonance is the extent to which researcher's on-going interpretation is in tune with that of the research participants'; validity is 'seeking confirmations, refutations, and reformulations throughout the project' (p. 307). The current study is designed in such a way that it allows for participatory approaches to be used for data generation and its interpretation. However, given the context-dependent nature of observations, any broad based or universal claims of validity are problematic (which is not even the purpose of a quality inquiry). The issue of validity is also addressed through 'triangulation' (Stake & Savolainen, 1995) i.e. considering the phenomenon from multiple standpoints with multiple strategies. Triangulation can be seen in terms of data, investigators, theories and methodologies (Snow & Anderson, 1991). In the current study, multiple data sources (e.g. policies, official documents, policy makers, planners, educational leaders and managers, implementers, teacher educators, clerks/ peons, others) and tools (such as

interviews, document analysis, field observations, visual metaphors/ images, narratives, others) have been used to achieve triangulation – i.e. to reduce biases in particular data sources and research methods through its juxtaposition with the other data sources and research methods (cf. Jick, 1979).

Furthermore, methods (such as data generation workshops) and accompanying tools are used pattern seeking – i.e. to generate relatively large scale data to see whether the emerging patterns from the large scale data confirm, refute or enrich the findings generated through the in-depth study.

The current chapter (i.e. Chapter 2) provided a detailed description of the research design – describing and justifying the methodological choices through highlighting the significance and potential of the methods and tools in relation to the purpose of the study as well as the context of the study. It also discussed upfront the role of the researcher vis-à-vis how the issues of embeddedness and potential researcher's bias are addressed to ensure the rigor and credibility of the research process. In the next few chapters (Chapters 3–7), the overall findings and analysis of the research study are being presented, organised in terms of the four phases of the research (each responding to the subsidiary questions that the present study pursues).

The next chapter (Chapter Three) responds to the first subsidiary research question (RQ1) and presents findings of Phase I of the study i.e. it analyses how the management practice has evolved in the public sector of Pakistan.

CHAPTER THREE

Evolution of Education Management Practice in Pakistan
– A Cultural -Historical Analysis of the Activity System
(Research Findings – Phase I)

Activity (or Practice) is a historically developed phenomenon (Engeström, 2001). Historicity, as discussed earlier, is one of the key principles of activity theory. The activities being investigated must be viewed in relation to their evolution/ history; the dynamics of a particular situation can be understood by exploring how it has evolved over a period of time. Therefore, a historical analysis is crucial to make visible the changes that may be taking place within an activity system (Cole, 1996; Engeström, 2001). Engeström (2001) has suggested that in addition to the history of the activity and its objects, the history of the theoretical ideas that have shaped the activity also need to be analyzed. Following the suggestion, the current chapter discusses briefly the evolution of public management within the context of political developments in Pakistan and, more specifically, the educational management in the public sector. This insight is helpful in tracing back and exploring patterns of learning in the context of public organizations in Pakistan.

More specifically, the chapter responds to the first subsidiary research question (RQ1) i.e. it analyses how the management practice has evolved in the public sector of Pakistan, what the cultural-historical context of the public sector management in Pakistan is, and how it has influenced the management practice in public sector of education. It traces the evolution of public education management within the broader context of political developments in Pakistan, followed by a macro view of the current situation or context of educational management. Since with reference to the Activity Theory, a broader cultural-historical analysis is an important condition for carrying out the in-depth analysis of the specific case, the current chapter helps in situating, understanding and interpreting the findings of the case study (presented in Chapter Four) as well as the overall findings of the study.

Given the aim and purpose thus described, the current chapter begins with a brief history of Pakistan, discussing the socio-political context, how it is shaping and being shaped by the public policy and management in Pakistan. This is followed by a brief history of public management in Pakistan. Next, an overview of the education policies is provided so as to discuss the specific conceptualization of educational management in the policies (i.e. to understand how the official or ‘given’ object has been constructed), and identify the various issues and challenges as well as key policy shifts. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the current context or situation of education management at a macro level, followed by construction of a general description of the district education offices based on this earlier section.

The chapter can be seen in terms of three distinct sections: The first section (3.1 – 3.5) discusses the historical context of the public management (and management of public education); the second section (3.6) describes the current context of the public education management; whereas, the third section (3.7) presents a portrayal of the district education offices. The Table 3.1 summarises the overall organization of the chapter.

Table 3.1: Organization of Chapter Three

Section	Focus	Data Source	Purpose/ Rationale
3.1 – 3.5	Cultural-historical context of public management in Pakistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy review and analysis• Secondary Data - Scholarly work done both by national and international scholars	Situating and interpreting the findings of the case study in its broader cultural-historical context to add more depth to the findings of the case
3.6	Public management of education in Pakistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual Interviews of the Key Stakeholders drawn from across the country• References to available empirical work are also made	Situating and interpreting the findings of the case study in the broader context of ‘public management to add more depth to the findings of the case
3.7	General description of DEOs	This section is based on earlier sections to synthesize the findings presented .	The synthesis of the findings in form of a general portrayal of the DEOs helps in validating the findings of the study of a specific case

3.1 A Brief History of Pakistan

This brief history has been constructed from a general view of most of the history writers in Pakistan (where needed, specific references have also been provided). Pakistan is a Muslim country, with 96-97% of Muslim population (Cf. <http://www.pbs.gov.pk>). It is a mainland generally known as ‘Indian Subcontinent’ and also as British India. This subcontinent – comprising of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan – had once been a colony of the British Empire that came into power after overthrowing the Muslim monarchy in the sub-continent.

Pakistan emerged as an independent state on the world map in 1947 i.e. after getting independence from the British Empire that colonized India in 1857. The decolonization of British India created two countries: India and Pakistan (comprising of two wings – West Pakistan and East Pakistan). Later, in 1971, East Pakistan got separated and emerged on the map of the sub-continent as an independent country i.e. Bangladesh.



The DNA (hereditary material) of Pakistan has been a culmination of pre-colonial monarchy, colonial period and anti-government struggle known as the ‘Pakistan Movement’ (researcher’s synthesis of his diverse readings about Pakistan). The majority of the scholars, when explaining the social phenomenon in Pakistan, make a reference to any of or a combination of the above mentioned influences. For example, Wilder (2009) has observed that Pakistan’s colonial experience has heavily influenced its political culture (i.e. institutionalization of patron-client political relationships between the bureaucracy and local elites) as well as its bureaucratic institutions – i.e. the so-called ‘steel frame’ of the civil service that Pakistan inherited from the colonial India has become decidedly rusty. Contrary to Wilder (2009) explaining the crisis of governance in Pakistan, Niaz (2011) in his book, ‘The Culture of Power and Governance of Pakistan 1947-2008’, has asserted that the powerful class has reverted to pre-colonial norms and has become more arbitrary, proprietorial and delusional. This has led to a strong motivation for privatization of the public resources and promoted ‘rent seeking’ tendencies among bureaucracy. However, the majority of the scholars agrees that the state institutions have become dysfunctional, over-politicized, and corrupt (Niaz, 2011; Wilder, 2009; Cohen, 2011).

The historical analysis offered in the following paragraphs (based on a general view of the writers of history and current debates in Pakistan and how the researcher has come to make sense of this scenario) aims to trace the institution of public management (as superset of education management) vis-à-vis the various political developments in Pakistan over the years.

3.2 The Socio-political Context of Pakistan – Its Influence on the Public Policy and Management

Pakistan is a very diverse land, having people with different ethnicity, languages (such as *Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pushtoo, Balochi*, etc.), customs and aspirations. The religious, ethnic and linguistic divisions have deepened over the years. Karachi, the largest city of Pakistan, which is also known as a trade/ economic capital of Pakistan, manifests ethno-linguistic differences in their extreme forms among the *Urdu*-speaking – the *muhajirs* (partition migrants from various parts of India), *Pashto*-speaking *Pukhtun* (migrants to the city from Khyber Pakhtoon Khwah – KPK – and parts of Balochistan), and the *Sindhi*-speaking natives of the province. As of now, the country is facing terrorist activities and attacks being carried out by extremist religious factions. Easterly (2003) has argued that ethnic and class polarization is closely linked with Pakistan's poor performance on social development aspects. Easterly's observation highlights poor performance of public sector organization in delivering public good.

In political domains, as several researchers agree (see some notable references in the following lines), this diversity or differences have allowed several political parties and groups to build on these differences and, thus, strengthen their power base. As a result, the socio-political system is much fragmented. Lieven (2011) has argued that political factions 'exist chiefly to seek patronage'. Similarly, Mohmand (2011) found that in a politically fragmented system, it is in the interest of all – politicians, their vote banks, and even voters themselves – for public service delivery to be targeted at specific groups. This indicates that patronage is inextricably linked to the social fabric of Pakistan. What binds the society together is kinship. For instance, Lieven (2011), while commenting on Pakistan's state and society, argues that the network of kinships has contributed to the strength of the society and, at the same time, has weakened the state.

Pye and Pye (2009), in their seminal work, 'Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimensions of Authority', asserted that power is a key concept for understanding the socio-political dimensions of a country; and they have drawn insightful distinction between dominant Western notions of power and Asian perspectives (by implications, Pakistani): Asians conceive or treat power as status (with accompanying demands for dignity and deference), whereas, the West views power as 'decision-making, as agendas setting and determining courses of action'. This paternalistic form of power (evident in the Asian context) privileges dependency (loyalty and / or submission) over autonomy, harmony/

compromise over conflicts and contradictions, relationships over rules, and collective identity over efficiency. These observations and comments are reflected in Lieven's (2011) description of what works in Pakistan (see his discussion on 'negotiated state', patronage and kinship).

Pye and Pye (2009) argue that, by and large, 'power is seen as residing in the person of high officials and not in their offices or in institutions' in an Asian context; the personalization of power links legitimacy more with private behavior rather than official conduct and, therefore, the use of public office for private gains is generally acceptable in an Asian context. These observations are very relevant for Pakistan and link well to the discussions relating to the context of corruption in Pakistan.

Corruption in Pakistan is pervasive (Jain, 2002; Shaikh, 2009). This widespread corruption is affecting Pakistan's economic, social and political development (Khawaja & Khawaja, 2007; Wilder, 2009). Some researchers, for example, Awan (2004), argue that the roots of corruption in Pakistan go back to the colonial period when lands and titles were to buy and sustain loyalties. Verma (1999), in another study, shows that long-term corruption actually becomes cultural. Vittal and Mahalingam (2000) assert that corruption in the society is associated with the values and morals of that society. Contrary to this assertion, however, Lieven (2011) argues that corruption in Pakistan is not a result of lack of values; rather, it is a part of the system and is linked to patronage and kinship.

These historical experiences manifest themselves in terms of the expectations, aspirations and attitudes of the administrators and the citizens of Pakistan; their influence on the public management is also evident in the following discussion on its history.

3.3 History of Public Management

The Sharif Commission Report of 1959 has argued that the colonial legacy has contributed four ills to Pakistani society: 1) Passivity and non-cooperation; 2) indiscipline and non-acceptance of public authority; 3) placing of self before community; and 4) the disruptive forces of regionalism and provincialism (see p. 6). The comments relate to the context of public institutions in Pakistan at that point of time. This report, like several other official reports, associates the social ills with the colonial experience.

After independence, the political history of Pakistan represents the power struggles between civil bureaucracy, the military and the politicians (Zaidi, Bhutta, Mohmand & Acosta, 2013). Military is one of the most important power players, and has ruled directly

over the country for more than three decades. The majority of the scholars relates to the military rules the ill-formation of civil institutions, the proliferation of patron-clientage culture and the overall lack of public participation in governance. The persistent power struggle among the civil, military, bureaucracy and politicians has majorly contributed to the lack of attention to public policy and its implementation (Zaidi et al., 2013).

The following paragraphs trace the history of public management in Pakistan, using the following arbitrary phases within the broader context of intense polarization and kinship and power struggles, mostly for personal gains:

1. The Initial Phase – Applauding the Role of Bureaucracy (1947 – 1971)
2. The Second Phase – Undermining the Role of Civil Bureaucracy (1971 – 1988)
3. The Third Phase – Increasing Politicization of Bureaucracy (1988 – To date)

3.3.1 The Initial Phase – Applauding the Role of Bureaucracy (1947 – 1971)

The British Empire developed powerful and highly centralized bureaucratic institutions to rule the empire while the representative institutions were kept as weak (Wilder, 2009). This means that after independence from British rule, Pakistan inherited strong bureaucracy and weak politicians. The power imbalance between these two institutions has largely influenced the political and institutional history of Pakistan.

With the inception of an independent country, the public institutions worked hard and provided leadership, order and stability (Huntington, 2006) and built their image and reputation as relatively honest, efficient and dedicated civil servants. During this period, the elected politicians could not exercise their power over bureaucracy, which played a dominant role in policy making and its implementation. The politicians have to cooperate with the bureaucracy to have a semblance of power and buy political patronage for their voters (ibid, 2006).

General Ayub Khan, the first military dictator, with the help of civil/ military bureaucracy took over the charge of the government in 1958. He provided both, challenges and opportunities to the civil bureaucracy (Shafqat, 1999). As Shafqat (1999) has observed, General Ayub Khan put pressure on bureaucracy through several means, including appointment of army officers on important administrative positions. He developed positive relations among military and civil bureaucracy. The civil servants ‘enthusiastically’ supported the programmes of the military regime (1958-1971), which lend them increased

power, privilege and prestige, especially for those who served in the districts. Niaz (2011) has observed that during this period, the increase in the development spending and role of civil servants in local governments contributed substantially to the level of corruption in the country. The local politicians, during this period, adapted themselves as ‘political manipulators’ and ‘instruments’ of the military regime.

3.3.2 The Second Phase – Undermining the Role of Civil Bureaucracy (1971 – 1988)

This phase consists of two periods: 1) The Democratic Government (1971-1977); 2) The Military Rule (1977-1988). The protest and agitation against the authoritarian rule of the first military dictator, General Ayub Khan, in 1969 led to the collapse of his rule. This was also accompanied by portrayal of the bureaucracy as an instrument of oppression (Shafqat, 1999). This political turmoil was followed by the bloody civil war that resulted in the separation of East Pakistan. These events seriously undermined the political strength and legitimacy of both, the civil and military bureaucracies (Wilder, 2009).

This was the context in which the first elected Prime Minister, Zulifqar Ali Bhutto, took charge of his office in 1971. He had a clear focus on reducing the power of the public servants (the civil bureaucracy). He took several measures to reduce the imbalance between the elected politicians and non-elected bureaucrats (Kalia, 2013). Wilder (2009), in his important work, *The Politics of Civil Reforms in Pakistan*, has made important observations. Bhutto introduced the policy of ‘lateral recruitment’ as a way to increase political influence over the bureaucracy and also removed the constitutional protections (such as dismissal, reduction in rank or compulsory retirement of public servants) present in the 1956, 1962 and interim 1972 Constitutions. The anti-bureaucrat policies of the elected regime created a lot of resentment and insecurities in the public servants, which was followed by a rapid politicization of the civil service. Interestingly, during the same period (mid-70’s), the academic community and the World Bank began to reassess and reevaluate the role of bureaucracy (Laporte, 1975). This period ended with the toppling of the government by the second military ruler, General Zia ul Haq, in 1977.

Zia overthrew the democratic government and ruled the country for the next eleven years. He did revert some of the anti-bureaucracy reforms of Bhutto’s rule, such as lateral recruitment, yet he ensured that the civilian bureaucracy did not regain its preeminent position in policymaking (Wilder, 2009). Zia also increased the quota for military officers in civil service. Coupled with administrative reforms and his aversion for party-based politics,

the local government reforms enhanced the influence of local politicians in the public service delivery (Khawaja & Khawaja, 2007).

3.3.3 The Third Phase – Increasing Politicization of Bureaucracy (1988 – To date)

This phase consists of three different periods marked by the common thread of increased politicization of the public institutions: First Period (1988 – 1999): Imperfect Democracy – the ‘Lost Decade’ of Pakistan’s History; Second Period (1999 – 2008): Third Military Rule; and Third Period (2008 to date): Democratic Rule.

The net effect of this quarter of the century has been increasing corruption and politicization of the bureaucracy, though each phase contributed to this differently (for example, see Niaz, 2011). From 1988 to 1999, the political governments had been very unstable – eight prime ministers took the office (including four care-taker prime ministers during the interim periods). Strong political polarization characterizes this period. The political polarization directly contributed to the politicizing of the public service, which had already begun in 1973. This politicization has compromised neutrality, morals and effectiveness of the civil service (see Shafqat, 1999; Niaz, 2011; Kalia, 2013).

The continued instability of political governments ultimately led to the military coup in 1999 and General Parvez Musharraf took over the government as the third military ruler. For legitimacy and centralization of power (see Khawaja & Khawaja, 2007), he issued the ordinance of devolution of power in 2000, which got implemented through local bodies’ election in 2001. At the district level, the elected politician was made the boss of the bureaucracy for the first time. Through this devolution plan, the service delivery at district level got into the direct control of the local politicians; this further strengthened the role of politics in the management of public institution and increased public servants’ dependence on pleasing the politicians.

With the resignation of Musharraf and democracy taking some roots in the country, the devolution plan was reverted; yet, the dependence of civil servants on the politicians for their posting has only increased. Under the 18th Constitutional Amendment, more autonomy has been granted to the provinces – for instance, Education has now become a provincial subject.

3.4 Public Management - A Case of Managing Politics of Power

While commenting on the bureaucracy in Pakistan, Wilder (2009) has argued that capacity issues, over-politicization and corruption have contributed to the ineffectiveness of the state institutions; thus, undermining Pakistan's economic, social and political development. Similarly, while asserting states as bureaucracies, Cohen (2011) has observed that the actual capacity of the Pakistani state has eroded over the last sixty years. This observation is also consistent with the very low comparative ranking of the country on different governance indices, as mentioned earlier. Given the situation, Imam and Dar (2013) have suggested that it is crucial that Pakistan revisits its public sector institutions.

The majority of the scholars argue that the power to govern has rested for long periods mainly and majorly with unelected institutions, such as the army and the bureaucracy (for example, see .Shafqat, 1999; Niaz, 2011). Thus, there has not been sufficient need for the rulers to be concerned with representing the needs of the general populace (Zaidi et al., 2013) and to ensure genuine participation of the public in governance (Rose & Rouquie, 1978; Mohmand, 2011). The provision of most of the public services did not follow the universal principles; rather, they followed discretionary ones (Keefer & Khemani, 2005) – this promoted political patronage. Land-owning politicians have avoided the introduction of agricultural taxation and, according to some accounts, have worked against greater educational opportunities for all in order to perpetuate their own power (Husain & Kennedy, 1999).

To contextualize the discussion, there is a continuous need to clarify and distinguish the concepts from their common (usually Western) connotations or understandings. Lieven (2011), in his insightful analytical work, ‘Pakistan: A Hard Country’, has also highlighted the tensions between state law and the local law as follows:

The state's law is felt by many ordinary people not just to be rigged in favour of the rich, and hopelessly slow, corrupt and inefficient, but also to be alien – alien to local tradition, alien to Islam...and conducted by the elites for their own benefit.

Lieven (2011) argues that the state law, which is modeled on Western law, aims ‘to abolish crime altogether’ while the customary law or folk law (which is more powerful than the state law) has different aims: ‘the defense of collective honour and prestige; the restoration of peace, and the maintenance of basic order’. The customary law in all its manifestations is influenced by local kinships and power relations (Lieven, 2011). Lieven's (2011)

observations provide insights into the historical accumulation of contradictions between formal rules and/ or ‘unwritten rules’ in the public management activity system.

3.5 Overview of Education Policies – Specific Conceptualization of Educational Management and Analysis of Issues

In this section, first, the education policies will be discussed to highlight the specific conceptualizations of educational management as are present in the policy documents. Then, the key issues faced by education management will be presented to contextualize the current management practices. Though most of the policy analysts have criticised educational policies on their repeated failure to deliver and for being rhetorical (see Bengali, 1999), yet policy analysis still offers very pertinent insights for the purpose of the current study; for instance, in understanding the ‘official’ or ‘given’ conception/ construction of ‘Object’ of the activity system.

3.5.1 Educational Management – Official Conceptualisations of the Object

This section presents a review of policy perspective regarding the management of education, tracing through history how the different policies have conceptualized the education management in Pakistan. The following paragraphs summarize the major policies, their articulation of the very purpose of education (so as to see the given object in its broader context of purpose or vision), as well as more specific comments regarding the Management of Education.

The various policy directives provide useful insights in relation to how the ‘object’ of the activity system i.e. educational management or, more specifically, school management has been conceptualized and defined officially (i.e. from a policy perspective). The historical tracing is significant in that it highlights how and, if at all, the object of the activity system has been transformed over a period of time.

The National Education Policy (NEP) of 1947, which was basically in form of the proceedings of the first National Conference on Education, did not make any explicit reference to educational management. However, it did refer to the education system as having been designed to serve a narrow and ‘utilitarian’ purpose, with its lack of realism, non-adjustability to changing societal needs, ‘literacy bias’, and ‘uninspiring’, ‘soulless’ character. These comments are very important in marking the point of departure since

Pakistan got its independence in 1947 from the British Rule. The following section discusses the official conceptualization of educational management.

Management as A-specialized Field

Different education policies conceptualised educational management or administration as a specialised field that needs both, the knowledge of education and administration (see the Commission Report of 1959). The Commission Report recognises that efficient administration requires technical competence, administrative ability, and an understanding of educational developments in different countries of the world. It, thus, puts emphasis on training for improving the administrative ability and professional competence and as a condition for promotion. Similarly, the National Education Policy 1992 asserts that the management of education requires a special type of professional expertise. The most recent education policy, National Education Policy 2009, argues for a separate ‘management cadre’ for education, which is situated in the overall discourse of lack of implementation and commitment gap.

Management as a ‘Physical’ Supervision of the Schools

One of the school management functions – i.e. school supervision – has been a crucial component of the conceptualization of school management since 1979. The said policy mentioned that the number of schools to be supervised by an ADEO (Assistant District Education Officer) or a DEO is rather large or that the schools are situated at great distances (at present, the school supervision, by and large, has been abandoned). The same theme was asserted in National Education Policy 1992 by recommending that not more than 15 schools should be allocated to each supervisor. The same policy also asserted that mobility of the supervisory staff need to be enhanced.

Management as a ‘Distributed Authority’

The decentralization of the educational management has been a sustained and consistent theme in the NEPs since 1969 to date. The policy instrument for decentralization took different operationalizations in different policies, such as District School Authorities (DSAs) in NEP 1969-1970, Educational Councils (NEP 1972), School Management Committees (SMCs) in the most recent policy of 2009. Administrative efficiency, more academic freedom and community participation – these have been used as arguments to support the rhetoric of decentralization.

Management as a 'Non-politicized' Activity

This conception in a way is related to the continued understanding of management as a specialized field. National Education Policy 2009 has mentioned that:

Education sector management shall be left to the Education managers without any intervention from politicians and generalist civil servants; only then the education managers can be held accountable for outcomes. (pp. 29)

The policy not only asserts education management as a specialized field but also argues for lack of interference on part of the politicians and generalists in this field.

Bengali (1999), in his critical review of educational planning in Pakistan, shows that educational planning has continuously been a failure 'at great public expense over the last 50 years'. The educational policies explicitly acknowledged the failure of educational management through different policy statements and noted that a focus on administrative role has become more dominant while attention to educational matters has remained peripheral. To address this issue, policy reminders are evident and there has also been a change of nomenclature from 'Educational Inspectorate' to 'Educational Directorate' though without much gain (See Memon, 2001). The following section specifically traces the management challenges as discussed in the policy documents.

3.5.2 History of Management Challenges

Engeström (2008) has asserted that a historical analysis of the contradictions of activity theory is very crucial, and if that is not done, the theory becomes either another management toolkit or another psychological approach without the potential for radical transformations. Time and again, educational policies have specifically identified management challenges. The mapping of these challenges could be very effective in developing insights regarding contradictions (using the discourse of activity theory) in the system.

As discussed earlier (see Chapter Two), contradictions are historically accumulating structural tensions within and between the activity systems. Contradictions present potential and possibilities for change in the system (changed people with new identities and improved tools) as argued by activity theorists (see Engeström, 1999). Contradictions are not the same as problems or conflict. However, recurring challenges indicate the contradictions within the system. Therefore, a summary of the key challenges identified in the policy documents is

provided in the Table 3.2 below, where an additional column explicates the relevant contradictions based on the policy analysis.

Table 3.2: Key Challenges related to Educational Management – A Policy Review

Policy Periods	Policy Review of Key Challenges related to Educational Management	Key Issues	Contradictions in the System
1947	Lack of realism, inability to adjust itself to the need of a rapidly changing society, over literary bias, utterly uninspiring, soulless character	Not aligned to the emerging societal needs	Bound by colonial legacy vs. need for futuristic orientation/perspective
1959	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational service has not been drawing its share of the ablest young men available • Performance needs to be comprehensively and continuously evaluated; promotions to be based upon demonstrated ability 	Issue of limited competence	Required competence vs. available competence Purpose of activity vs. tools used for the activity
1969 – 70	The administrative set up of education in Pakistan inhibits initiatives and creative self-expression; the need for relative freedom and responsible participation	Restrictive administrative system	Impersonal bureaucratic system vs. need for participation
1972	The present educational administrative set-up is inadequate and unnecessarily complicated because of a variety of somewhat superficial tiers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate • Complicated system 	Complicated system vs. need for responsive outcomes
1979	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System of educational management and supervision is a legacy of the past and is not equipped to cope with the increasing and changing demands of education in the country • The existing institutions, structures and modes of operation cannot accommodate effective implementation of policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not aligned to emerging societal needs • Sporadic management reforms • Lack of internal consistency • Vested interests 	Colonial legacy vs. current social needs Capacity of existing system vs. policy requirements for implementation Existing ineffective procedures vs.

Policy Periods	Policy Review of Key Challenges related to Educational Management	Key Issues	Contradictions in the System
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A few sporadic attempts made here and there have also failed to bear any fruit because of lack of internal consistency of reforms and pressure of the vested interests operating against them at various levels of the system The rule and regulations governing day to day administration of the schools continue to remain cumbersome and detrimental to the efficient functioning of the system The Education Code formulated during the colonial period has seldom been revised There are no arrangements for the training of educational supervisors and administrators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> at various levels in the system Outdated Code; cumbersome rules and regulations No arrangements for management training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> functioning requirements of the system Affordance of capacity building initiatives
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many of our failures in the past have been less owing to resource scarcity than to the administrative and managerial inadequacies Not many of our educational managers are trained in the art of management of education, which requires a special type of professional expertise Administrative norms do not allow for participation of community in the management of educational institutions at the local level Training of educational administrators was only a casual process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate management and administration Inadequate management training/ training system Limited management competence Limited local/ community participation in management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of resources vs. capacity to utilize those resources Required competence vs. available competence Impersonal bureaucratic system vs. the need for participation
2009	Two fundamental causes for weak performance of education sector:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment gap 	Existing commitment vs.

Policy Periods	Policy Review of Key Challenges related to Educational Management	Key Issues	Contradictions in the System
	<p>1. Lack of commitment to education – the commitment gap; and</p> <p>2. Implementation gap that has thwarted the application of policies</p> <p>The pervasive nature of corruption reflects a deeper malaise where service to students and learners is not at the forefront of the thought and behavior processes in system operations. Implementation problems can be traced to several types of governance issues, which need to be addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of a whole-of-sector view, • Lack of policy coherence, • Unclear roles in fragmented governance, • Parallel systems of education (public-private divide), • Widening structural divide, • Weak planning and management, • Lack of stakeholder participation, • Political/ bureaucratic influence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation gap • Pervasive corruption • Lack of coherence or systems perspective/ approach (fragmentation) • Lack of role clarity • Lack of stakeholder involvement • Political/ bureaucratic influence 	<p>required commitment</p> <p>Implementation</p> <p>capacity of existing system vs. output requirements of the system</p> <p>Public service vs. personalization of benefits</p> <p>Atomistic orientation of the system vs. holistic requirements of education</p> <p>Incoherence among policies</p> <p>Managing as neutral activity vs. managing as a politicized activity</p>

Source: Constructed by the author based on a review of the National Educational Policies of Pakistan

The analysis of key management-related challenges identified by the policies is quite insightful. For instance, a number of conclusions can be drawn based on this analysis, which are listed below.

First, the nature of challenges identified since independence to date can broadly be categorised in terms of only a few major categories; these are:

1. *Outdated/ Inadequate System*: The educational management or administration system is outdated, and not aligned (nor adjustable) to the emerging societal needs. It is quite restrictive also.

2. *Complicated System*: Not only is the system outdated, it is also complicated – it is governed by an outdated Code, and cumbersome rules and regulations; the existing tiers add further complexity.
3. *Lack of/ Limited Competence*: The system not only lacks in terms of management competence, but there are also no adequate arrangements for training.
4. *Lack of Systems Perspective*: The management system is also lacking in systems approach and, coherence or internal consistency, reflected in the sporadic nature of decision making and management reforms or lack of role clarity at various levels in the management.
5. *Commitment Gap/ Corruption Issue*: There are vested interests at various levels in the system as well as the commitment gap and pervasive corruption.
6. *Political/ Bureaucratic Influence or Interference*
7. *Lack of Stakeholders' Participation*: There is limited local or community participation in the management.

Second, it is quite interesting to note that the nature of issues and challenges identified has not changed much or significantly over a period of time (1947 – 2009 to date), that is, nearly after six decades. The challenges, more or less, get repeated in these policies. However, some of the challenges have become more intense. This reflects that the system, as conceived by the policy, has not evolved in the desirable direction, at least.

Third, the educational policies, more recently, have started to admit and acknowledge, more explicitly, some persistent issues such as:

- a) Pervasive nature of corruption and commitment gap;
- b) Political/ bureaucratic influence; and
- c) Lack of system's perspective.

The challenges mentioned above are indicative of the persistent contradictions in the system; these contradictions, for instance, are: Colonial legacy vs. future orientation, required competence vs. available competence, purpose of activity vs. tool used for the activity, impersonal bureaucratic system vs. the need for participation, capacity of existing system vs. implementation requirements of the policies, provision of resources vs. capacity to utilize those resources, public service vs. personalization of benefits, atomistic orientation of the system vs. holistic requirements of education, managing as neutral activity vs. managing as a politicized activity, and incoherence among policies.

There is a strong understanding and acknowledgement that the public sector of education is fragmented and that sporadic intervention (towards education management reforms) cannot work. Thus, a need has been identified in the latest policy document to develop the education system as a learning organization. The public policies on education have consistently emphasized educational management as a specialized and complex field and, therefore, the need for personnel/ managers to be recruited with a more holistic understanding as ‘education managers’. The recent policies’ priorities include a special or separate ‘Management Cadre’ based more on administrative grounds.

The next section looks at the current scenario in some more detail to see the cultural historical forces have shaped up the current context of educational management.

3.6 Educational Management – Understanding the Current Context or Situation at a Macro Level

While the previous section looked at education management from a historical perspective, the present section offers a macro view of the current situation or context of education management in Pakistan. The current situation has been constructed through an analysis of individual interviews conducted with key stakeholders in relation to education management in Pakistan. These stakeholders include policy makers, decision makers, educational officials, senior researchers, INGO educational representatives, and some others. Since these key officials have worked at a macro level – of policy making, decision making or policy implementation – on a number of key positions, the interviews not only provide a macro perspective, but are also embedded in a policy and planning perspective. Moreover, since they have had extensive experiences of working on key positions, they embody historical perspective in their view, reflected through their comments.

The individual interviews, therefore, focused on an understanding of the macro view of education management in Pakistan through the perspectives and experiences of these key individuals – the variety of stakeholder interviews (seen with reference to this earlier review of policies and other empirical work as well as researcher’s own experiences) also cross validated findings generated by each individual interviewee. The analysis clearly indicates the pattern of experiences of the key stakeholders who made quite a representative sample. The main emphasis of these individual interviews, as discussed in Research Methodology (Chapter Two), was to get their insights on, for instance, understanding the district management offices as public sector organisations – their key characteristics, changes and

evolutions as well as the key influences, the systems learning over a period of time, etc. Retrospectively, the most powerful dimension of the tool used was asking the key officials to describe the district education offices through use of a metaphor, which resulted in very powerful description of these offices. Metaphors have certainly provided richer and deeper insights that may not have been, otherwise possible. Some of these metaphors echoed many of the key findings in the study and, therefore, have been presented in the concluding chapters to synthesize the discussion.

The next few paragraphs present the key findings of the individual interviews in terms of the key categories that emerged out of the data analysis. Moreover, what the district education offices currently look like, as a result of the interviewees' metaphors or images of district education offices, is described in some detail as a logical conclusion to the current section (the summary and synthesis of the individual interviews have been provided as Appendix E for detailed reference).

3.6.1 Accountability Issue

There are consistence references in most of the interviews (see Appendix E), which indicate that lack of accountability in the system comes across as a major issue in the public sector in general and education sector in particular. The issue of lack of accountability has been linked by the respondents to other issues such as corruption, low outcomes, political interference and unmanageability. One of the interview respondents asserted that, "*when you [officers] cannot punish or reward your subordinates, you should not worry about outcomes*". Some of the earlier reports by other researchers have also identified similar concerns. These reports highlight, for instance, the issues of lack of proper accountability mechanisms, excessive transfers and corruption as negatively contributing to the effective implementation of development programmes (SPDC, 1997; The World Bank, 1999). The lack of accountability may be associated with society's tolerance of 'inequality and power distance' (Islam, 2004). Cohen (2011), in his recent and well recognized book, 'The Future of Pakistan', has argued that though Government transparency has increased with the rise of media power, yet institutions are not held responsible for their actions and policies. The individual interviews with key stakeholders prove that Cohen's analysis is particularly relevant with reference to the management of education.

3.6.2 Corruption

Corruption comes across as one of the most consistent and dominant themes in the interviews (see Appendix E) identified as an overall culture of public sector in general but, especially, in relation to the culture of the education sector. Corruption, in its broadest term, is the misuse of entrusted power for personal benefit. The data (interviews, personal experience and observations) suggest that the networks of corruption are not only well-established in the system but they are so strong that people now think of education and corruption in simultaneity. Corruption has also been described as ‘viral’ i.e. *“it is relatively easier for someone to get tempted to become corrupt because the overall system is so corrupt and there is no fear of accountability”* (interviewee). The interviewees also trace the infiltration of corrupt practices historically – for instance, one of the interviewee’s mentions that corruption entered the system in 80’s (this is the era where international donor projects started pouring in).

The findings from interviews also get substantiated by what some other scholars (for example, Shafqat, 1999; Quershi, 1999; Khan, 2001; Husain & Kennedy, 1999; Khawaj & Khawaja, 2007) have also argued earlier i.e. the performance of bureaucracy has deteriorated over the years due to corruption, demotivation and abuse of official authority, and that the collusion between bureaucrats and politicians has also badly affected the provision of public service.

3.6.3 Power and Authority

Power emerges as another major category (though linked to other categories), where the interview data identify in detail various types of power and how power gets exercised to mediate organisational performance or learning. For instance, the numerous kinds of power or pressure groups that emerge in the data (see Appendix E) include: the Feudal Power, the Politician’s Power, the Positional Power, Money Power, Procedural Power, Ownership Power, etc.

The data suggest that power gets exercised in the system to influence its processes or outcomes in various ways; for instance, through ‘Political Intervention’ – e.g. power is exercised through political recruitments of managers, teachers, lower staff and others in the educational hierarchy. *“There is hardly any posting made in district education offices without the will of local politicians”* (interview data). This indicates that political influence on recruitment in Sindh is huge, which has implications both, for performance and observance of official procedures. Public sector has become politicized – political influence has played a

negative role i.e. against public good. This negative exercise of political power has been identified in the data as one of the major causes of system deterioration or failure. Islam (2004) argues that the exercise of power without adequate accountability is a great temptation to misuse public power for private purposes.

Power, as the data (interview and observation) and personal experience suggest, is also exercised via position – e.g. as DEO, EDO or Director. It is quite interesting to note that when it comes to positional power, it is not exercised only at the higher level but at the level of a clerk also. In fact, clerk comes across as the most influential person when it comes to positional power (as organizational memory, as gatekeeper, and as a person who has the procedural knowledge by virtue of continuity of service in the same organisation). One very interesting and consistent finding from the data (interviews) and personal experience is that in the public sector organisation in general and education sector in particular, procedures are complex – as another venue for exercising power. Furthermore, it has been reported that lack of continuity of the senior leadership has resulted in weak governance, which is what the politicians want – as power is exercised through keeping the governance weak (i.e. transfer and promotions are the tools used for exercising power). Power is bought with money also, as suggested by interviews and personal experience.

A very important dimension identified in relation to the power discourse is that the issue of lack of ‘ownership’ has also been highlighted as an issue of ‘power’ – it is discussed that there seems to be no ownership of the public education system at any level, especially, with the existing conflict between bureaucracy and political system, and because of the loss of trust (and hope also) in the public sector management/ system by the community/ public at large. One of the respondents asserted: “*We all know that public property means that all of us have rights to loot that...*”. This lack of ownership has resulted in deterioration of standards, and it also weakens the possibilities of reform. Consequently, ‘nothing can happen here’ is a pre-dominant mindset reflected through the interviews and general observations. This lack of ownership, it is noted, provides a relatively easier context for players or actors involved in corruption. By the same argument, hope for DEOs seems to reside in community taking more ownership.

3.6.4 Rules

The National Education Policy 1979 states: “The rule and regulations governing day to day administration of the schools continue to remain cumbersome and detrimental to the efficient

functioning of the system” (p.72). The interview data provide similar insights into the issue of organisational rules. The majority of the respondents believe that rules are quite complicated and outdated, and without the necessary ‘SOPs’ (Standard Operating Procedure). Similarly, they agreed that the application of rules is also not consistent across the board. One of the respondents emphasized that “*rules are for fools and for weak*”. The comment seems to capture the general use of rules in public sector management.

Islam (2004) has linked selective application of rules to not only injustice but also to corruption and nepotism. In addition, the generic nature of rules for all and lack of specific rules for education sector organisations have been quoted by majority of the respondents as a major challenge of the system. Furthermore, the overall inaccessibility of rules (quoted as being difficult, less user-friendly, too generic to be applied to specific cases) adds to the organisational challenge, and has been identified by the interviewees as a major reason for lack of policy implementation. Rules are of such nature though that some deviations are possible – however, the common practice seems to be to use these deviations for wrong reasons (cf. interviewees and personal experience). For some interviewees, hope lies in the reform of rules and regulations i.e. they believe that organisational performance can be improved if some reform in the rules can be made, e.g. making them more accessible and implementable.

3.6.5 Learning in the Organization – What are the DEOs Learning?

A general observation and comment (cf. interviewees) about organisational performance is that over a period of time, district education offices have actually deteriorated; however, what has happened now is that the speed of deterioration has increased.

Given this context, what the system has learnt or learns seems to be ‘Negative Learning’ – e.g. learning lethargy and corruption. Then, individuals in the public sector learn how to spend funding, how to remain aligned to the overall system, how to exercise power, authority and control (see Appendix E) – they develop an understanding of the overall context of power and corruption and these are the key learnings to survive in the system (i.e. to stay on their position of authority). To improve organisational performance in a positive way, a strong suggestion that has emerged from the interviews is, therefore, to re-organise and re-conceptualize DEO as a task-focused/ task-driven or performance-based reward system, with accountability and reward-punishment mechanisms in place. Furthermore, the use of

technology (possibly E-governance) has also been indicated as an important measure of organisational efficiency and, therefore, performance, which these DEOs lack.

3.6.6 Lack of Coherence or Multi-voicedness

Paris (2010), an American analyst, in his recent and comprehensive study, ‘Prospects for Pakistan’, has noted the ‘state fragmentation’. The issue of fragmentation (or lack of coherence) also figured out prominently in the analysis of educational policies. This overall fragmentation within the system and in the way educational (and management) reforms are approached has been highlighted as one of the major problems facing the DEOs in particular and public sector organisations generally; the interview data is quite consistent in reporting this. Several examples provide evidence of system’s fragmentation – for instance, it is quite interesting that in the public sector organisations or DEOs, motivation for work or positive efforts are individually driven – the system has nothing to do with these. A consistent comment about DEOs is that they lack a ‘system’ – conversely, it is interesting to note that the system of corruption or bureaucracy as a system is quite well in place and working rather ‘systematically’. This, in a way, implies that the current DEOs are more of a network of interacting activity systems or that they are multi-voiced systems.

3.6.7 Reward/ Punishment

As noted earlier, reward and recognition are closely associated with the development of organizational learning in the public sector organizations (Roland, 2007). Reward system also provides strong clues for understanding the prevailing norms. Thus, understanding the reward/ punishment system was a central attention while analyzing the interview data.

The majority of the respondents observed that the existing system basically ‘rewards’ submission and obedience to authorities and power. The common adage in the public sector is, ‘*keep the boss happy*’. One of the respondents argued that the public sector employees are evaluated against the binary of compliance-defiance rather than their performance or contribution to the system: The person who is ready to ignore rules and regulations to help the other is usually considered as ‘cooperative’. ‘Cooperation’ with the boss is more important than with the rest – “*you will have to suffer if you displeased your boss*” (Interview data). The findings point to a strongly submissive culture dominant throughout the public sector in general and public education sector in particular and to the culture of corruption which is widely prevalent.

The majority of the respondents explicitly articulated that the system does not reward performance or competence. This is quite contrary to the expectations developed from the literature where OL is linked to performance management of the organization (see Moynihan, 2005). In the PSOs/ DEOs, on the other hand, the interview data and personal experience suggest that a diligent worker gets penalized for doing good or efficient work through getting more work and pressure (their work never ends). He/ she may have to face some other complications, too. For instance, he/ she may be reported against on spending, through application of the complex, complicated and outdated financial rules. It is interesting to note that those officers/ individuals who spent budget legally (on development work) tend to get into the hot water (cf. interview findings). This is one reason for lack of spending (despite the system's needs) by managers who do not want to engage with commissions and cut-backs.

These insights about the system of reward and punishment are very important, as they are reflective of the organisational attention/ focus, processes, outcomes and performance: The honest/ policy-driven people also get under pressure since the collective action (system of corruption/ nepotism) creates pressure for those who want to follow policies or work through proper channel. It comes across as a system where performance does not get rewarded, but penalized instead (in many instances).

3.6.8 Incapacitated System

One of the key findings that gets frequent and detailed mention within the data set is that the system has become quite rusty, lethargic and incapacitated, in general. The data show that the district management lacks capacity; that the managers lack capacity for management and one explanation for it comes from the fact that it is basically because of the teachers recruited as 'managers' and that also without the necessary training and background of management. Lack of competence/ capacity has also been identified as an important reason for lethargy in the system. Various explanations for system's lethargy are also offered – for instance, that lack of capacity at all levels of management contributes to the system's lethargy. In effect, lack of competence is highlighted to an extent that some mention that currently the DEOs are not professional organisations – if so, what kind of organisations are they, and what should we call these if they are not professional organisations?

3.6.9 Organisational Purpose i.e. Construction of 'Object' (What are DEOs for?)

DEOs' official object is to manage education/ schools for provision of quality education. On the contrary, the interviews' data show that most of the DEOs do not view their role in relation to teaching and learning. DEOs, as reported, are mostly attending to other matters which may be remotely associated with the provision of quality education. Interestingly, some of the core processes related to the stated purpose of the organization are being shifted towards the periphery: For instance, 'school inspection' used to be a very important dimension of district education management in the past – as practically connecting DEOs to the schools through school visits (despite their limited focus during the inspection visit) – most of the respondents consistently observe that the school inspection for educational purposes does not take place in most of the districts of Sindh (if it takes place, it is quite sporadic). This means that the stated 'official' Object of the activity system (which has already been narrowly conceptualized and implemented) has further contracted.

The official understanding emphasizes managing of schools with the help of community (all educational policies emphasize this aspect). The interview data is mostly 'silent' on this aspect. However, when it is probed with the interviewees, the majority observed that the DEOs have no real intention to involve the communities despite the various policy provisions in this regard. Consequently, the public schools, in most cases, have lost the public trust to the extent that even the lowest strata of the society do not send their children to public schools (though public schools are more affordable than the private sector and often financial incentives are also given to increase enrolment). There seems a consensus in the data that, in most cases, the focus of DEOs remains on getting more and more benefits from the government rather than serving the clientele.

To conclude, the management practice seems to have moved over the years. Through historical tracing and analysis of the current situation, the following transformations have been articulated (see Fig. 3.2):

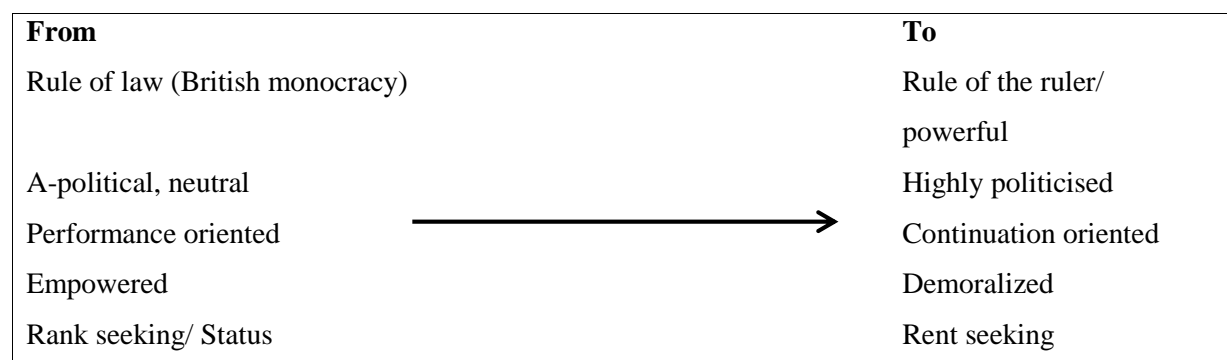


Fig. 3.2 Historical Tracing of the Major Shifts in the Behavior of Bureaucracy

3.7 District Education Offices – A Description

3.7.1 Physical Description

Based on a summary and synthesis of all the findings (from policy reviews, review of existing empirical work, interview data and personal experience/ observations) and discussion presented above, the following picture of the district education offices emerges.

District Education Offices have been described as a huge part of a huge system – public sector education is large and deals with a large section of the society. The system is so huge that its maintenance cost alone is quite a heavy investment – a major portion of the educational budget is spent on recurring costs (e.g. salary of 150,000 teachers and a large number of other public staff, including the district education managers). The implications of its size are many and various – e.g. maintenance costs are quite high; implementation of reforms gets difficult; the movement of the system is impeded; the scope of work and the challenges are huge; and so is the resource wastage within the system and because of the system, etc.

The physical condition of the DEOs is not very attractive – they come across as general public offices, not as educational set-ups or public service-oriented structures. These offices generally lack reception and guidance on contact persons; they also do not have any library. A typical setting of a district manager's office would have the district manager as sitting across a large table, surrounded by a large number of people (visitors, applicants, favor-seekers, assistant managers, etc.), talking with each other or smoking cigarettes (male office) and having tea, while a DEO would typically be multi-tasking – signing letters, talking to all these individuals, attending phone calls, attending to visitors though hardly paying much attention.

DEOs have highly centralized organisational structures and are characterized by a very 'high power distance' culture (using term from Hofstede & Hofstede).

3.7.2 Functional Description

The legally defined or policy-driven function of DEOs is to manage the school education at the district level – they have an administrative as well as academic role to play in managing the school education (the 'official' object). However, this is not what happens in reality – not only the enacted object is different, but the difference between the official and enacted object

is also quite huge. In actual implementation, the construction of object of the activity system (by the education officials/ manager) comes across as the following: To serve those who appointed them; to gain power, authority and control which is reflective of the society wide trend; to become an ‘officer’ instead of a low status teacher; not to work hard or teach but to stay in big offices and do desk work; maintain control on others instead of being ‘service-oriented’; be on a lucrative position, where others can be manipulated for personal or economic gains, which could also mean to get return on initial investments made to the political authorities or other influential people to gain access to this position.

The focus of the organisational attention remains on forms and structure – on the administrative aspects of their work. Correspondence and information seeking/ provision remain the main functions of the DEOs. The implementation of the official object (though partially) used to be done through school inspection visits – however, with the passage of time, even these have become extinct. Even if they take place, the purpose is hardly to improve educational outcomes or to observe what happens as part of teaching and learning process; instead, it is to catch the wrong doers for personal/ economic gains (in many cases). The district education office includes a number of staff members, whose purpose is to provide academic support at the school level (e.g. learning supervisors or coordinators); however, they remain in the district education offices, doing clerical/ administrative tasks of data entry, etc., serving the DEO. These findings are consistent with the existing findings on the subject in the province (e.g. see Mohammad & Kumari, 2009).

3.7.3 Communicative Description i.e. Description of Organization’s Interactions

The communication pattern depicts three kinds of communications taking place: a) Information seeking; b) Information provision; and d) Orders for implementation. The DEOs remain engaged in either sending information upward or downward or implementing orders issued from the top (for further details, see following chapters). The upward communication is generally about HR related matters concerning managers, teachers or other staff.

3.7.4 Other Key Characteristics of DEOs

Lethargic System

The system has been described as lethargic and there are numerous reasons identified for system’s lethargy. For instance, the system is lethargic because of the prevailing culture of submission (‘Boss is always right’), which is also reflective of the overall national culture of

submissiveness and obedience: Because it is submission and obedience that gets rewarded not extra efficiency or honest implementation of policies, the system is lethargic. Workload in the public education sector is not rationalized – the more work one does, the more work comes their way. Therefore, most of the managers know quite well how to stay away from extra work. There is also the general psyche that doing work means making mistakes – inaction is the best remedy for not committing mistakes and, therefore, staying safe (a good example, as discussed above, is the lack of spending of the development budget despite the needs because of the potential audit issues). This creates lethargy in the system, for most of the staff is not ready to complete their work effectively and efficiently.

Furthermore, one of the major reasons for lethargy is also incompetence – because there is so much incompetence at various levels, the officials/ managers tend to delay matters or complicate them in such a way that their incompetence does not become evident. In this connection, the issues of complicated, generic rules (without SOPs and guidelines) are helpful allies, as they help the incompetent officers to make the procedure so complex that actions get delayed. So, the delaying tactics and making things complicated are used very frequently in the system. Rules are so generic and complex that they create a barrier in implementing them efficiently which, in itself, is a good enough reason for system lethargy.

Another major reason for system lethargy is the job security – a public sector employee generally relies on the fact that their job is secure; moreover, it is not performance-based; rather, it is tenure/ seniority-based. Performance is not rewarded – what is rewarded in the system are submission, obedience, compliance, and non-interference with the prevailing system of corruption. This is what makes an incompetent, non-performing individual comfortable but the system slow/ lethargic. The political authority and the system of corruption promote weak governance, which creates barriers in decision making and implementation.

Thus, a combination of weak governance, political interference, corruption, incompetence, culture of submission and compliance, complex generic rules and complicated procedures, inverted system of reward and punishment – all these combined together have contributed to the lethargy of the system – the system remains hung-up most of the time. The overall fragmentation has also contributed to this lethargy. One important reason for lethargy is lack of ownership – nobody owns the public education sector, not even community and parents whose children suffer because of the existing low quality in the system.

Fragmented System

The system has been described as fragmented, where managers and staff work in silos. Fragmentation is also evident in the duplication of resources and efforts and policy or reform decisions. For instance, fragmentation is so deep rooted that donors get away with working in silos, too – their interventions remain much fragmented, often duplicating efforts and resources, rather than building on the experiences and lessons learnt of the earlier or parallel projects. The situation has improved, but not entirely so and this is in spite of the Paris Declaration for donors to coordinate efforts and development of the sector plan.

The current chapter (Three) traced a brief history of the evolution of the education management practice in Pakistan with specific reference to the broader context (e.g. that of the political developments in Pakistan) and the overall educational policy context, identifying the policy shifts as well as consequent shifts in the nature of challenges (resulting in contradictions) faced by the educational management in the public sector, more specifically. The historical analysis had been carried out to generate additional insights into the learning processes. The findings of the current Cultural-Historical Analysis of the activity system (district/ education management practice) provide the backdrop to situate and interpret the case study of the district education management in Sindh (Pakistan) discussed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

*Organizational Learning in Public Sector in
Pakistan – A Case Study of District Education Office
(Research Findings – Phase II)*

In order to generate deeper and holistic insights regarding the activity system – i.e. the Management Practice at the DEO, the current chapter presents an in-depth study of the case of the district education management in Sindh (Pakistan), using Activity Theory as a framework of analysis. The chapter, thus, presents findings of Phase II of the study i.e. deeper and richer insights into how the education management practice has evolved and been enacted in a selected district of Sindh (responding to RQ2).

Based on a discussion of the Activity Theory as a theoretical framework in Chapter 2, the case study has been conducted in a selected district of Sindh, i.e. ‘Sindbad¹’. The process has been guided by the questions (see Chapter 2 for details) that have been developed on the basis of the AT.

The chapter is organized as follows: The initial three sections are descriptive in nature, as they describe the broader context (at provincial and district level) as a backdrop to help situate the case study of management practice (activity system) at the specific DEO, followed by a more analytical discussion on the case. Without the descriptive analysis of the overall context, it is difficult to make sense of the specific findings of the case study. The chapter, thus, begins with a brief description of the education management in the province (Section 4.1) to help understand the broader context of the study i.e. at provincial level. Section 4.2 provides a description of the district (to help understand the broader context of the study i.e. at district level), whereas, Section 4.3 presents a description of the specific District Education Office (the case) under study to make sense of its management practice (activity). Section 4.4 defines the case so as to discuss the activity system more rigorously in the following section (4.5). The Section 4.5 is, thus, more analytical; it discusses what the activity system is and how this particular activity system (management practice of district education office) has evolved. The Section 4.6 takes the discussion on the activity system further through discussing the organisational routines – the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ of the activity system. The Section 4.7 discusses the key influences on the management practice and the final section (4.8) presents key conclusions emerging from the case study in relation to DEO as a case of OL. Table 4.1 below presents the overall logic and structure of the case study in some more details.

Table 4.1: Logic and Structure of the Case Study

¹ Pseudonym

Section	Brief Description	Purpose/ Links to Research Outcomes	Reference to AT
4.1	Discusses the management hierarchy in the province (<i>Descriptive</i>)	This section provides details on how DEOs are embedded in provincial management of education – to understand its influence on the district management system	Understanding activity system vis-à-vis external environment/ larger system at provincial level
4.2	Provides a description of the district (to help understand the broader context of the study i.e. at district level) (<i>Descriptive</i>)	To help understand the broader context of the study at the district level	Understanding activity system through developing some insights regarding the district itself – its key facts and figures
4.3	Presents a description of the specific District Education Office (the case) under study (<i>Descriptive</i>)	Describing the context of DEOs to situate the case/ for a better understanding of the case	To make sense of the DEO's management practice (activity system)
4.4	Defines the case so as to discuss the activity system more rigorously in the following section	To discuss the activity system more rigorously in the following section (4.5)	Briefly introduces the Activity System (the Management practice)
4.5	Discusses what the management practice is, and how it has evolved (<i>Analytical</i>)	Understanding the evolution of the management practice	The evolution of the activity system (management practice) is a key to understanding the learning in/by the organization (in this case DEO, Sindbad)

Section	Brief Description	Purpose/ Links to Research Outcomes	Reference to AT
4.6	Discusses the organisational routines – the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ of the activity system (<i>Analytical</i>)	Examines analytically the district management activity system in detail vis-à-vis the key concepts of the activity theory.	It provides further insights into a) how object is contested and constructed; b) the mediation of the activity by tools, rules (both formal and informal) and norms; and c) outcomes of the activity. The mediation process links individual to the collective activity.
4.7	Factors Influencing the Management Practice (<i>Analytical</i>)	This section discusses the role of key stakeholders and influences exerted by socio-economic conditions of the district upon management practice	Such analysis helps in understanding the factors influencing the evolution of the activity system
4.8	Conclusion (<i>Synthesis</i>)	This section pulls together threads and provides concluding statements	Synthesizing and making sense of the case/ the activity system (OL at DEO)

The activity system under study is the Management Practice in a specific public sector organization – the District Education Office. The DEO is situated within the larger hierarchy of the provincial (and national) public education management, which is why it is important to discuss this.

4.1 Management of Education in the Province (Sindh)

The current section provides some discussion on the educational management at the provincial level; however, before doing so, it is important to present some facts and figures (generally available on national websites, and also through personal knowledge, as I live in Sindh) about the province so as to understand the management of education in perspective.

The second largest province of Pakistan in terms of population and the third largest in terms of geography, Sindh has 23 districts, with Muslims as the majority of the population and some other religious minorities (e.g. Hindus, Christians and Zoroastrians). Sindh is a multi-lingual province and the majorly spoken languages in the province include Sindhi, Balochi and Urdu. The capital of Sindh, Karachi, is not only the largest city of Pakistan, but its financial center also; Sindh's urban areas reflect an industry or service related economy, whereas, the rural areas are dominated by agricultural economy. The prevailing ethnic diversity and political polarization in Karachi has been briefly touched upon in Chapter 3. Sindh's rural and urban population ratio is 52:48 (cf. 2010).

The total literacy rate in Sindh (as of 2010-11) is 59%, with urban literacy rate as 75% and rural as 42% (cf. figures provided by Reform Support Unit, Education & Literacy Dept. Govt. of Sindh); sadly, there has not been much change in the figures when compared to the educational scenario (reflective of educational performance) in 2009-10. Furthermore, at primary level, the dropout rate is the highest and the gender parity index is among the lowest in the provinces. School education in Sindh is managed through a hierarchical management structure, the national policies and mainly through provincial regulations for civil servants.

The following paragraphs provide an overview of the organizational hierarchy, policies and/ or rules and regulations. The organogram (Box 4.1) portrays the hierarchical structure of the Department of Education and Literacy at the provincial level.

Box 4.1: Organizational Hierarchy at Provincial Level

After Education Minister, Secretary Education is the head of the department. Secretary Education is supported by Special Secretaries. Currently, there are 4 Special Secretaries. The next level of hierarchy is: Additional Secretary: Currently, 8 Additional Secretaries are working. Each Special Secretary is supported by Deputy Secretaries. Currently, 14 Deputy Secretaries are working in the Department of Education. Each Deputy Secretary conducts his/ her official duties with the help of Section Officers (SOs). Currently, 32 SOs are working in the Education Department. In most of the cases, the SOs have their own support-staff, such as clerks and peons.

The Education and Literacy Department is headed by the Education Secretary under the political leadership of the provincial Education Minister. The Education Secretary is supported by a large number of senior bureaucrats such as the Special Secretaries and

Additional Secretaries responsible for General Administration, Endowment, Higher Education, Academic and Training, Services and Coordination, Planning and Development, and schools. Each of the Additional Secretaries is further assisted by Deputy Secretaries and Section Officers.

Within the Education Department, the School Section looks at the affairs related to schools, their teachers and staff. The school section is probably the most significant and influential one due to being responsible for around 43000 schools in Sindh. Over the years, the Department of Education in Sindh has created a number of specialized departments to improve the quality of education service delivery; these include, for instance, the Provincial Institute of Teacher Education (PITE), Reform Support Unit (RSU) and recently, the Sindh Teacher Education Development Authority (STEDA). Some of these departments have been created under large scale donor funded education reform projects. For example, the PITE was created under a project supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Unfortunately, the introduction of new departments, however, has resulted in duplication and overlap of functions. The most representative example of such confusion is the roles of BoC, PITE and STEDA (see more details in Teacher Education Strategy 2018 or Education Sector Plan 2014-16) – despite multiple efforts in past and at present, there is no clarity among these departments as to who will be responsible for what. For instance, PITE is responsible for teacher training, whereas, Bureau of Curriculum (BoC) also undertakes teacher training, thus, resulting in tensions in roles/ functions (and consequent inefficient use of resources). Moreover, though PITE is assigned the responsibility for the academic component (teacher training) of the teacher education institutions, the administrative control over these institutions remain with BoC, thus, creating difficulties (e.g. in terms of accountability) due to the overlapping management structures. The allocation of assignments to these organizations is ad-hoc and mostly inspired by donors. The administrative hierarchy below the provincial level (i.e. at the divisional, district and school level) is discussed in the following paragraphs.

After the provincial layer, there are, currently, two levels of hierarchy: the Divisional level and the District level. Moreover, there are six divisions in the province, and each division comprises of a certain number of districts. There are 23 districts across the Sindh province. The divisional level (re-implemented in 2012) plays an intermediary role between provincial and district level management. The introduction of such administrative reforms has its roots

in the checkered history of decentralization in the province. The management hierarchy, a simplified version, is described in Box 4.2 below.

Box 4.2: Management Hierarchy

- Provincial Level – Headed by Secretary Education
- Divisional Level – Headed by Director Schools
- District Level – Headed by District Education Officer (DEO)
- Sub-District Level – Headed by Assistant District Officer (ADO)
- Union Council Level – Headed by a Supervisor
- School Level – Headed by School Head

Source: Constructed from official documents

4.2 Management of Education in the District - Sindbad

The current section discusses the educational management at the district level; however, before doing so, it is important to present some facts and figures (generally available on national websites, and also through personal knowledge, as I live in Sindh) about the district so as to understand the management of education in perspective. Sindbad (pseudonym) is one of the oldest towns in the province – an important district, located near a large city. The total area of the district is 12.32% of the total geographical area of Sindh. The district comprises of four sub-district units, known as ‘*talukas*’ in local language. The rural population of the district had been 89 percent of the total population in 1998. The society is quite traditional, and marriages are preferred within the same tribe/ community and mostly done on exchange basis (one female exchanged for another female). Majority of women observe *pardah* (covering head and/ or face). The overall culture is quite representative of the culture of the old Sindh – e.g. traditional games (involving expression of physical strength) are common. The younger generations, however, now engage in modern games, such as cricket, which is otherwise quite popular at the national level. People strongly believe in the spiritual power of the local saints. The majority of the indigenous clans live in this district. Sindhi is a language spoken by more than 92% of the population, whereas, *Balochi*, *Brohi*, *Seraiki*, *Punjabi* and *Urdu* are the other languages. Women actively engage in informal sector of economy (such

as taking care of livestock, working in agriculture fields, local handicraft, sewing and stitching).

Overall, if we look at the educational scenario in the district, it does not seem very promising – the percentage of the children (when assessed by ASER 2013) in the district who could read a story in Urdu/ Sindhi (less than 5%), read a sentence in English (5%) or can do two-digit subtraction in Arithmetic (1-2%) is very low. This percentage is the lowest when compared to some other districts in the province. The current situation is in spite of the huge investments in the so-called education reform projects e.g. the following significant educational projects and programmes funded by several donor agencies have been implemented in Sindh (by implication, in the district under study also) to achieve the target of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and improve the school governance and management required for effective education. Table 4.2 lists the major educational reform projects that have been implemented in the district over the past three decades.

Table 4.2: Major Education Reform Projects – Sindh

Dates	Projects
1979 – 1984	Primary Education Development Project
1985 – 1990	Primary Education Development Project-Second Phase
1990 – 1998	Sindh Primary Education Development Programme
1990 – 1995	Girls Primary Education Development Project
1997 – 2002	Girls Primary Education Development Project-Second Phase
1992 – 1996	Science Education Development Project
1990 – 1993	Primary Education Curriculum Reform Project
1995 – 2002	Middle School Project
1993 – 2000	Teachers Training Project
1992 – 1996	Social Action Programme (SAP) Phase I & II
1997 – 2002	
2003	Education Sector Reforms Assistance (ESRA)
2007 – 8	EDLINKS: Education Links to Learning

Source: Developed by the Author based on various reports and official presentations

Under these projects, attempts have been made to reform the system by introducing new concepts, such as ‘child-friendly school’, ‘activity-based teaching and learning’ and ‘mentoring’. Teachers’ guides and students’ supplementary learning materials have also been

developed under these projects (researcher has been involved in such projects). However, it is very difficult to find traces of these material artefacts and the institutionalization of these concepts (as is observed during the field visits).

The majority of the research participants observe that reform projects have not contributed positively to the state of education in the district; rather, they have promoted asymmetry in the distribution of resources in the system: *“The system started to deteriorate when donors’ money was pumped into the system...there was no check and balance...no audit of the money...”* (DEO, Interview). The school supervisors particularly mention that what teachers learn from their trainings, they do not use in their teaching (in classrooms). One supervisor comments: *“What could be more attractive for a teacher than not doing anything, just sitting in the classroom [training center], and earning money in the name of TA/DA?”* The data indicate that the reform projects in the district have not contributed well towards initiating a positive change.

4.3 District Education Office – Description

Chapter Three made a generic portrayal of a DEO in the public sector, whereas, this section provides a description of this specific DEO in Sindbad (based on observation/ field notes). The Sindbad District Education Office is housed in a reasonably large building, with spacious offices, well-decorated also, especially, the ones allocated to the senior officers (such as DOE, DDO). The office is situated in a location where there are many other public offices in its vicinity. The physical condition of this office is much better than the general description of the other similar offices; one reason could be the recent construction of the new public offices.

The DOE’s room is equipped with air conditioner, computer, printer, comfortable sofa, chairs placed across his table, and stationary. There are altogether 3 rooms and one big hall (where all the clerical staff and administrative staff are housed); the big hall also includes a number of file cabinets, over-flowing with files/ papers (a scene very typical of the DEOs in general).

In the compound of the office, I have noticed a good number of many vehicles of new models, reflective of the financial status of the people/ staff that visit the place. During my field visits, often, there have been groups of people sitting outside the offices or they would be called inside the office for meeting with the DOE or relevant person in the lower ranks of

the official hierarchy (after the DOE). The DOE seems to entertain those influential individuals who are either known to him or they come through a reference (cf. field notes).

4.4 Defining the Case (the Activity System)

The main focus of the case study is to explore and understand how the education management practice has evolved and been enacted in the selected district of Sindh (Sindbad). This implies understanding how the object of managing school education is constructed and contested by district educational managers. The ‘official/ given’ object has been discussed through a review of policies, official documents and perspectives (see Chapter Three) – i.e. managing the schools for improved learning outcomes/ quality of education. However, it is important to explore and understand the extent to which this official construction of the object is reflected in the construction by the actors and key stakeholders (e.g. educational managers, policy makers, community, etc.). The following section (4.5), therefore, discusses the management practice in terms of management of learning outcomes, teachers, schools as well as the expectations/ aspirations of the key stakeholders (parents/ community).

To understand the evolution of the activity system (practice), it is also important to discuss the concepts of ‘contradictions and mediations – i.e. the contradictions and dilemmas in the activity system, and how (and to what extent) they get resolved; how the organizational artifacts (linguistic and material) as well as organizational rules and norms mediate the processes of organizational learning. These important dimensions of the activity system are discussed in the subsequent section (4.6) as organisational routines.

Since management practice relates to managing school education in the district by the DEO, it is important to highlight that there are three kinds of schools at the elementary level: Primary schools (Grades 1-5), middle schools (Grades 6- 8) and elementary schools (Grades 1-8). The establishment of schools does not follow the logic of educational planning; rather, it is inspired by political patronage (Hasnain, 2008); the present case study does take into account how political influence shapes the management practice at the district level. The activity of interest for the present study is the management of elementary schools by district education offices with the aim to draw insights for organizational learning in the public sector.

The following section provides further details about the practice of management.

4.5 What is the Activity and how has it Evolved?

The identification of activity and how it has evolved make the core of the case study; which is what the current section discusses. Besides an analysis of the official documents, one data generation workshop has also been conducted with a representative sample of district/ field education officers (30 in number). The specific details of the data generation workshop are provided in Chapter Two. The following section is based on the data generated through the workshop.

4.5.1 Management of Teachers

This is one crucial dimension of the management practice – that is, how teachers are managed by the DEO. A number of interesting observations can be made about how the management of teachers has evolved over a period of time.

The first observation which is quite consistent across the data is that the quality and commitment of teachers have shifted majorly. For instance, the comments indicate that 15 to 20 years ago, the *“teachers used to teach well and work hard”*; they *“used to consider their duty as duty”*; they *“used to be very competent”*; *“punctual”* and *“committed”*. In comparison, the teachers have now become *“weak and lazy”*; they are *“not interested in teaching”*; they *“are not regular in their duties”* and *“don’t pay attention to teaching”*, and that they are *“not committed to the job”*. The data suggest that though there has been less number of teachers in past, they were still effective, whereas, now the teachers are in large number but they are not effective; they are also less experienced. Two sets of observations are evident regarding teacher competence and recruitment procedures – one, that the teachers in the past *“used to be only high school graduates but the teaching learning was still very effective; the standards have changed now [i.e. become low]”*. Second, that the standards have further deteriorated when the process to hire teachers on Quota system (allotted to MPA and MNA) had been initiated – e.g. see the following comment: *“a 5 class pass person becomes teacher – how can they teach?”* (cf. comment by an Education officer). Many still maintain that though recently, the teacher recruitment is being done on merit (through commission exams), the quality standards of teachers in past used to be quite high. This, in effect, implies that the overall management of teachers has not resulted in positive outcomes as compared to the practice of management teachers in the past.

Moreover, the data provide some very interesting insights regarding power and authority of teachers versus that of supervisors' (i.e. district education management). One set of comments made during the data generation workshop indicates that earlier the teachers used to have a lot of authority as part of their role: The overall *"school system was the responsibility of the teacher – whatever information they gave was considered as correct"*; whereas, after the supervisory system have been put in place, the role and responsibility have shifted towards the district education managers, and they monitor and keep a "check" on the teachers and schools – e.g. the *"ADO supervises teacher and head teacher and checks with the students whether the information shared by the teacher/ head master has been correct or not"*. Whereas, in past, *"the teacher used to share how much content has been covered"*, now, the *"ADO checks by going into the classes"*. Furthermore, teachers' authority has also decreased in relation to their role and status in the community, which is reflected in the comments that whereas earlier *"school attendance was compulsory for children, otherwise, they could get punished"*, now, *"teachers can't say anything if the children don't come to school – parents can simply say that the child is working"*.

Another interesting shift in the recent years (more than a decade or so) that the data generation workshop highlights is the power shift – in this case, power shifting from supervisory staff to teachers, however, due to political interference. Earlier, *"the teachers used to be afraid of the higher officials"*, whereas, they are not afraid any more. Earlier, the *"supervisors had all powers/ authority to make the system effective"*, whereas, now, the *"supervisor has no authority to change any teachers according to the needs"*. Earlier, the *"supervisor could put a temporary stop to the salary of an absentee teacher"*, whereas, now they *"can no longer do this"*. Earlier, supervisors *"could check school record"*, they *"checked teachers' punctuality and regularity"*, and also *"advised regarding student learning"*, but now *"teachers are more powerful – they come and go on their wish"*. The power of teachers and the powerlessness of supervisors are increased due to the influence of political parties and teachers union and associations (which will be discussed in the later part of this chapter).

An additional factor that gets highlighted in the data as a barrier to supervisor's effective enactment of their roles is the management's requirement from them to continue collecting/ providing information about schools, often, repeatedly so, as is reflected in the following comments made at the workshop: Earlier, *"supervisors had the power and authority to work for the betterment of the schools"* and they *"used to guide teachers in teaching"*; whereas, now, *"supervisor has no authority to put a stop to the salary of a 'ghost'"*

teacher even – now 24 hours we are required to provide information”, and that “due to the information needs, supervisor is kept busy in the office work all the time”.

4.5.2 Management of Learning/ Outcomes

Managing the learning outcomes – that is, the ultimate aim of the DEO as per the given/ official construction of the object. The overall findings indicate that the education system, over a period of time, has in effect deteriorated, as reflected in the following comments: *‘Education system was good [earlier]. Now, only formality is being met.’*

Some of other comments (see Box 4.3) also provide detailed insights in relation to the different aspects of education.

Box 4.3: Stakeholders’ Comments about Learning Outcomes

“Due to many schools, school enrolment in each school is less.”

“There was less number of schools, but provided good education. There are more schools now but less education.”

“Schools used to be less but teaching used to be done well. Many schools but teaching is not done well.”

“There used to be proper planning of syllabus and teaching and syllabus completion used to be done according to the timetable/ timelines. This is no longer the case.”

“The school was center of co-curricular activities. It’s not the same now.”

“Teaching according to time table; not any longer”

The data summarized in Box 4.3 suggest that the earlier focus on teaching and learning has diminished to a greater extent. Earlier, there had been appropriate planning for examination and the management had an active role; whereas, now, examination means that the supervisors will visit and have lunch and go back: *“Examination has now become a lunch opportunity for the supervisors”* (individual interview). Similarly, the teachers in the past used to feel more empowered in making the student accountable for learning. One participant

puts forward the question: “Now, the teachers cannot punish students; then, why the students will listen to them?”

For many participants (though they are implementers of the policy of discouraging corporal punishment), now teachers have lost authority to ‘make the students learn’. This is an interesting observation that educational managers are not in much favor of the policy that they are implementing in the department. Some participants also label this as an “imported” idea from the West and wonder how it can help the system in Pakistan. Overall, this reflects a strong cultural understanding about relating authority with coercive power.

All these findings provide significant insights in relation to the management of learning processes and learning outcomes - ‘learning processes and outcomes’ seem to be losing attention quite rapidly on part of the educational managers.

4.5.3 Management of Parents/ Community’s Expectations and Interactions

Typically, the main stakeholders of the public schools are parents and community members. With reference to the management of stakeholders’ expectations and interactions, the data provide important insights. The situation in this case also does not seem very promising as such.

Currently, despite the fact that formal mechanisms have been put in place for parent-school interactions and for enhancing the role/ involvement of parents in school related decision making – e.g. in form of School Management Committees (SMCs) – the comments reflect issues in this regard: “*SMC played an effective role in schools. SMC is not interested in school affairs*”. In fact, some of the comments highlight a negative impact of SMCs – as creating negative pressure on schools rather than contributing positively; “*There used to be no SMCs etc. in past; therefore, they could work without any pressure. Now, there is negative impact of SMCs on supervision – it should be changed*”. Box 4.4 displays some comments from the participants.

Box 4.4: Perceptions regarding Community’s/ Parents’ Role

“Local people/ community used to cooperate a lot with the teacher; this doesn’t happen anymore.”

“Parents used to cooperate; not anymore.”

“Parents encouraged teachers. Now, parents do not take interest.”

“School attendance was compulsory for children; otherwise, they could get punished. Teachers can’t say anything if the children don’t come to school – parents can simply say that the child is working.”

“The parents used to positively respond to teachers’ communication/ call. Now, the situation has reversed.”

The data (generated through various sources) indicate that parents/ community at large seem to have lost trust in the public sector education, which is reflected in the fact that now even the lower strata of society do not wish to send their children to public schools despite the fact that the schools do not charge any fee, textbooks are free and they do not have to buy uniform. They rather prefer to send their children to a private school.

4.5.4 School Supervision

School supervision has been an important undertaking by district educational management. This sub-section attempts to trace changes over the last few decades within context of increased number of schools, additional requirements of information management, and enhanced political involvement.

Currently, in the focussed district, the District Education Officer (DEO) is responsible for more than 3 thousands schools in the district, which implies that it would take more than 9 years if the DEO chooses to visit every school in their constituency by visiting 3 schools per day (public schools are open for 120 days or so in a year). This may indicate the ‘low priority’ attached to this important aspect of school management.

The change in the status and authority of supervisors has been very pronounced in the data (see Box 4.5).

Box 4.5: Shift in Role/ Authority of Supervisors

“Supervisors used to be considered as high status job. Now, supervisors have the lowest status as compared to others.”

“Supervisor had power; not anymore.”

“Supervisors had all powers/ authority [in past] to make the system effective. Supervisor has no authority [now] to change any teachers according to the needs.”

“Teachers used to be conscious of supervisors that their teaching mistakes may be noted. Teachers no longer listen to the supervisors for they get supported by their unions.”

“Could check school record also, but now the teachers are more powerful – they come and go on their own choice”.

“The suggestion made by the SDO based on school visit was immediately followed/ implemented; very little is followed up/ implemented now”.

“ADOs could use their powers (authority) freely; now it happens less”.

“Every officer used to be answerable to their seniors; now it happens less”.

“Supervisors had power and authority to work for the betterment of the schools. Supervisor has no authority to put a stop the salary of a ‘ghost’ teacher even.”

The Box 4.5 indicates the growing loss of authority by the field officers, mostly supervisors. Historically, in the national context, supervision is considered as ‘inspection’ which has its roots in the authority’s privilege to find faults and take appropriate actions/ measures against the defaulters. Thereby, effective supervision has been associated with power, control and authority. The data from the participants also indicate the issues related with supervisors’ capacity and commitment. For example:

Supervisors need to be trained from good organisation, which doesn’t happen anymore.

New supervisors lack experience – they should have facilitation for visits.

Supervisor as a field officer - had monthly diary...while visiting the school, would ensure keen interest in the school...checking the whole record of that school...conducted annual exams and also signed the result sheets of the school. Now, supervisor is wandering here and there. He does not know the responsibility of his particular job. They don’t visit per schedule. They don’t submit the particular information in due time. They don’t attend the meetings of the concerned officer. Now they are not aware of their duties.

Evaluation of schools was better then. Now the evaluation of schools is slow and tough.

Earlier, visits used to be according to informed schedule; now, sudden visits.

The nature of supervisors' work has also shifted drastically. From school supervision and concerns related to teaching and learning, the focus seems to have shifted mainly/ largely to the provision of information required by the higher ups repeatedly and for various reasons, as evident from the comments below (confirmed by earlier experiences of working with the DEOs):

Very little information requirements...too much information is required.

Supervisors used to get time to visit schools. Now they are limited to information provision only.

Information requirement has increased – no time for school visits.

Earlier, supervisor used to guide teachers in teaching. Due to the information needs, now the supervisor is kept busy in the office work all the time.

Furthermore, the nature of provision of facilities to the supervisors to support their school visits and supervision has also changed over a period of time.

Earlier, TA/DA was provided to the supervisor; now, no TA/DA.

Earlier, supervisors had been given motorcycle. Now, no conveyance is provided.

There were less number of schools in UCs – it was easier to supervise those; now too many schools in UCs.

Is the above data reflective of the declining interest and emphasis of the department? The data suggest that on the one hand, the supervisors have an allocation of a large number of schools for coverage; on the other hand, they are not being provided with any facilitation or support (e.g. transportation) to carry out these visits. On top of all this, supervisors are kept busy in office work or in provision of information to the higher ups; thus, discouraging them from school visits. Some of the supervisors/ field officers also comment: “*Earlier,*

administration was on seniority basis; now, no seniority"; *"Earlier ACR on merit; now ACR on payment or sources"*. This seems to implicate their supervisory performance. These are consistent comments across data.

The DEO (cf. interview) asserts that *"the traditional system of monitoring collapsed some years back"*. This is reflected in the comments made by supervisors and ADOs during data generation workshops – i.e. in past, the visits used to be *"instructional"*, whereas, now, the visits are a *"formality"*; they also highlighted the increasing *"corruption of SPEs"*.

All the discussion above clearly indicates that though the institution of school 'supervision' has changed much as compared to what it used to be in past, the changes have not been in a positive direction. The supervision of schools seems to be confined to provision of information to higher ups; the authority and role of supervisors also seem to be shrinking consistently.

4.6 Current Organisational Routines – the Who, What, Why and How of the Activity System

The current section discusses the practice of management in terms of the organisational routines by responding to questions that relate to the 'who', 'what', 'why' and 'how' of the activity system. Such relevant details help in further understanding the activity system.

4.6.1 Who/ Subject – District Education Officers (DEOs)

'Who' are the key players at the DEO? To respond to this question, the management structure at district level is illustrated in Fig. 4.1 below.

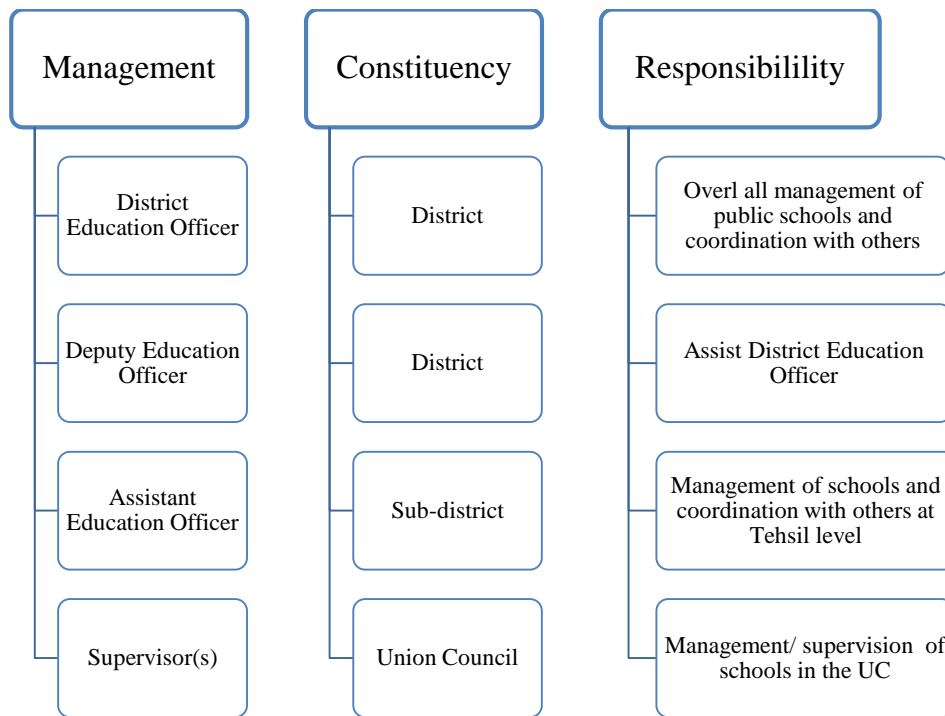


Fig. 4.1: Management Structure at District Level

As depicted in Fig. 4.1 (constructed based on information gathered in the field through interviews, observations and official document analysis), the District Education Officer (DEO) is responsible for school education at the district level and is supported by a Deputy DEO (given the volume of the work in the district). At sub-district (*tehsil*) level, Assistant DOE is responsible for management of schools. At the next level of lower hierarchy, there are Supervisors who are placed at Union Council level and are further distributed in terms of male and female schools (one for each). The Supervisors play a very significant role in the overall educational hierarchy, as they are the ones who are in direct contact with the majority of the schools. They are supposed to provide both, pedagogical and administrative support to schools. In sum, supervisors represent the street level bureaucracy, which is in direct contact with the level of practice (Lipsky, 2010).

The data (interviews, field notes and data generation workshops with field officer) show that the majority of the educational managers has not seen nor have been provided with any document containing their ‘Job Description’ (JD). Only one Assistant District Officer (ADO) insists that *“I know...um...under one project...I do not remember the name of the project...but I know the job descriptions were developed”*. However, I have not been able to access any such document. It seems (based on various interviews/ conversations and personal experiences) that they understand what the ‘actual’/ practical expectation is from them, which

it seems boils down to a very simple formula: ‘*Do what you are asked to do by the authorities!*’ In the absence of a JD, the criterion or occasion for ‘accountability’ (as described by them) becomes a situation where they have either not fulfilled the higher-ups’ wishes or have gone against those.

The field data show that the educational managers at all layers in the district are heavily influenced by the politicians, clerk associations and teacher unions. The DEO, in his interview, asserts, ‘...*the clerk association is so strong that one cannot even force the clerks to follow the office timings*’. The top down hierarchical organizational chart presents a very poor picture of the organizational functioning. A teacher who is at the lowest end of the educational hierarchy can be so strong (through political leverage) that he/ she cannot be held accountable for any misdeeds on their part. Most of the supervisors report that “...*it is impossible to make any teacher regular...he is so strong politically that we can lose our job [if we take any action against him]*”. It seems that there is a growing sense of powerlessness among the field officers.

The section has thus described the actors and the relationship among them, especially the power dynamics and how power is exercised.

4.6.2 What and How – Tools Mediating the Activity

Kaptelinen (1996) argues that all ‘human experience is shaped by the tools and sign systems we use’. The subject cannot act on the object directly. The individuals’ actions are mediated by tools (Kuutti, 1996). Tools may be conceptual, material and are the fundamental elements of human activity since they shape the learning for which they are used (Martin, 2008). Bannon and Bødker (1997) view artefacts/ tools as ‘crystalised knowledge’. Similarly, Daniels and Cole (2002) assert that tools are the products of human cultural historical activity. Therefore, attention to conceptual and material tools used by DEOs is an important consideration. The Table 4.3 summarizes some of the key tools relevant for the purpose of this study.

Table 4.3: Management Practice and Relevant Tools

Aspect	Tools	Comments
School Supervision/ Inspection	<i>Surprise visit</i> (termed as “ <i>Chappa</i> ” in the local discourse) – The school record is immediately checked such as	The main purpose of “ <i>Chappa</i> ” is fault finding and suggesting

Aspect	Tools	Comments
	attendance register and General roll call register. Physical head counting is done to verify the record. <i>Technical visit –</i> Detailed visit for inspection of various aspects including finances and class room teaching	punishment
Teachers Management	Teacher management is done through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher on visa • Official processes for leave etc. • Salary stoppage • Negative reporting for transfer • Classroom observation (usually without any tangible tool or prior notice) • Checking of students' work 	Most of the tools used for teachers' management are of coercive nature
Information Management	Information management at the DOE generally takes the following forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Statement • Enrollment data • ACR dossier • Account statement • School Facilities / Assets • SMC Record • School Inspection Form 	Most of the tools used are heavily quantitative Tools/ template for information seeking are not updated (not been modified for many years)
Stakeholders Interactions	Typically, stakeholders interactions take place through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings • Telephonic Calls • “<i>Parchi</i>” (a reference slip) • Personal visit to influential person's place/ home 	

The present study indicates that tools are not neutral – these are embedded in the social and political context. Table 4.3 indicates that several of the tools are used to assert power and, in most cases, not for educational purposes. Most of the tools used for teachers' management are of coercive nature; for example 'salary stoppage'. The majority of the formal tools

(official templates) hardly show any sign of appropriation (with reference to the changing times, context or needs). For example, the tools used for school visit, by and large, include reports, as shown in Box 4.6:

Box 4.6: Standard Statements on Visit Proformas

‘The school was paid a surprise visit’
‘X number of students were present in the schools’
‘All teachers were found busy in the teaching’
‘HM & DHM were advised to further enhance the quality of education’

On the contrary, innovations are evident in case of the development and usage of tools and procedures that relate to personal gains; for example, the ‘teacher on visa’ tool. The field data indicate several formats of this tool that deal with temporary to mid-term arrangements of such teacher placements in place of a regular teacher.

This section discussed the kind of tools (both, physical/ material and conceptual) that are used, and how these mediate the processes of working on the ‘object’ of the district education management.

4.6.3 What and How – Mediation by Rules, Norms and Roles

This section discusses the mediation in the activity system of/ by the rules norms and the roles. The mediation of rules needs to be understood in the broader political context and in the light of how power and authority relate and respond to the societal needs in the country (elaborated in Chapter Three).

Management of Public Education – Written Rules

The employees of the Education Department at the district level are governed by the civil service rules, which are applicable to all the public sector employees in the province. In addition to these very generic rules, there are a few specific rules that are approved and implemented specifically for education department which can, sometimes, be accessed from the government’s relevant websites. These rules relate to both personnel management (e.g.

hiring, firing, discipline) and organizational affairs (mostly procurements). Table 4.4 provides an overview of the rules highlighting the context of management in the district.

Table 4.4: Overview of Civil Service Rules

Date	Title	Nature
1966	Sindh Government Servants (Conduct) Rules, 1966	Personnel
1973	Efficiency and Discipline Rules	Personnel
1975	The Sindh Civil Servants (Probation, Confirmation and Seniority) Rules	Personnel
1986	Sindh Government Rules of Business	Organizational
1980	The Civil Servants (Appeal) Rules	Personnel
2006	PPRA Ordinance	Organizational
2000*	The Removal from Services	Personnel
2009	Sindh Public Procurement Act	Organizational

The above table shows that the rules date back to several decades, and that these rules largely deal with the employment matters at a very generic level. At workplace, however, norms (instead of rules) have a much stronger presence/ influence. To understand and explicate these organizational ‘norms’, I refer to field data from various interactions and observations (spread over six months) with educational managers at all levels - the following sections discuss these norms in terms of unwritten rules of educational management and/ or workplace concepts.

Public Management of Education – Unwritten Rules

Norms are the ‘unwritten’ rules. Identification of norms has been the most challenging task for the present study; however, intensive field work, interviews and data generation workshops helped in identifying ‘specialized terms’ that have become part of workplace

discourse. The Table 4.5 below presents these specialized terms in a manner that describes the very social context of the DEOs.

Table 4.5: Organisational Shared Discourse – Reflective of Organisational Norms

Workplace Discourses	Meaning
<i>'Chamcha geeri'</i> (Describing relationship with the boss)	This concept is mostly used in relation to authorities and bosses. The phrase is used to refer to a set of actions or strategies to please the boss. Chamcha is the one who appreciates – in a more explicit, elaborate and pronounced manner – every word, idea and action of their boss and that also, almost unconditionally. Usually, a chamcha also (mis)reports on their colleagues to the boss so that boss is well aware of what is happening in the office and can take action against the defiants accordingly. The concept is quite prevalent, however, several other terms are also used to refer to the same concept such as <i>'boot polish'</i> , <i>'makhan lagana'</i> (buttering).
<i>Juggar</i> (i.e. Ad-hoc Solution)	This is the most widely used concept, not only in the official setting, rather at other 'working places' also, such as automobile workshops, too. The concept, mostly common in the South Asia context, stands for a solution which is not according to the standard specification laid out and is, additionally, also adhoc. The most interesting aspect is that it does not promise or indicate that it is only there till the intended solution is in place; rather, it only emphasizes that the solution need is met for the time being. The concept is comprehensive and is used as a verb, a noun and an adjective.
<i>'Topi Karwana'</i> (i.e. Creating Semblance of a Solution)	In case of <i>'juggar'</i> , a 'short-cut' solution (mostly with different form) is offered while <i>topi karwana</i> refers to creating façade of the same solution but, in fact, not offering any thing as such. It also refers to situations when some lame excuse is offered as a genuine explanation or rationale for the situation (where, for instance, some assigned task has not been accomplished).
<i>'Fateek'</i> (Fatigue)	This concept is used in two senses: a) work as extra burden; b) losing

Workplace Discourses	Meaning
	money. It is a quite comprehensive term that refers to the situation where one has to either spend money and/or do some work as the request was made by someone in power (and you cannot refuse or ask for the compensation). For example, boss can ask their junior to pay their utility bill. In that situation/ power-relation, the subordinate cannot even ask for the amount of utility bill. This will be Fatigue for the subordinate.
<i>Visa System</i>	This refers to ‘management arrangements’ that allow regular employees to remain absent from their workplace but continue to be considered on-job and draw their salaries. Obviously, they surrender part of their salary to the collaborators.
<i>‘Khancha’</i>	This term is mostly used to indicate the opportunities of financial gains from any project/ proposition. Mostly, the term refers to the arrangements that can give one illegal money over a long period of time.
<i>‘Meethi Churee’ (sweet knife)- referring to describing relationships among colleagues</i>	This refers to a person who is appearantly quite polite and sweet towards other colleagues but, in actual, spies on them to report to the boss and ensure that they get disadvantaged in patron – client relationships existing in the office.

The description provided in Table 4.5 highlights that ‘specialized terms’ relate both to work and workplace relations, which portray the broader public sector’s work-culture, in general, and this specific district education sector’s workplace culture, more specifically. The dominant concepts that define the context emerge as, for instance, pleasing the boss (i.e. *chamchagiri*) to be in the good books for various reasons – including using unfair means to gain favor or money (i.e. *khancha*); following only the work/ orders that are top-down, otherwise, there is a general avoidance of work, where the avoidance strategies include finding shortcuts (i.e. *jugaar*) or lame excuses (i.e. *topi kerwana*). The relationship with colleagues, on the other hand, is hardly part of the general discourse and whenever it is mentioned, the connotations are not positive ones (e.g. see the description of *meethi churri* above).

Almost each time the participants have been asked what they think have been the unwritten rules for working in the public sector, what get mentioned among the top three are the norms that relate to the boss/ head of the department, which reflects a boss-oriented (and,

by implication, power-oriented) context and culture in the public sector organizations. The term, ‘boss’, is being used more broadly here to refer to other powerful stakeholders also in the system – e.g. politicians. Their comments (through interviews, data generation workshops and informal conversations) discussed in some detail below also get substantiated by the researcher’s personal experiences of similar nature.

One needs to “*follow the boss, whether he/ she is right or wrong*” (field staff). This implies that one “*should not challenge or question the boss or offer alternatives when the directives are top-down; the directives should simply be implemented as they have been given*”. Likewise, another rule that is mentioned is not to “*quote rules against some order passed down/ on to you*” (district education manager) or not to “*react/ oppose things which you think are wrong; it’s better to keep quiet*” (district education manager). In effect, the tasks are defined in relation to the boss – e.g. “*secure the approval of your boss even before suggesting anything in the official note*”, “*you will be late from your office only if you have reached in the office after your boss*”; likewise, “*stay in the office till your boss is there*” even if it is quite late hours (these are comments made by various research participants).

Furthermore, there are interesting unwritten rules regarding dealing with tasks/ official work (comments made by various research participants) – e.g. that the only “*important tasks are the ones which come from the top with, strict directives*”. For the rest, the rule/ advice is to “*try to avert the task, delay it, or postpone it*” because if “*you do your work carefully, you will be burdened with more work*”. Since one is “*not accountable for outcomes*”, one can “*just fill in time*”; “*there is no need to develop engagement with your assignment*” – in other words, this means, “*do not try to be ‘over smart’*”.

These ‘unwritten rules’ are quite powerful and pervasive in the public sector (as evident through interview data, informal conversations and observations during field visits as well as personal experiences), and are very helpful in understanding the nuances of management of school education also. These norms have heavily influenced the functioning of the District Education Department.

The written rules have limited use as noted in the study; though they are invoked for the purposes that may go beyond and besides the stated purposes of these rules. There seems a general agreement among the public servants that there is much more than written rules that are required to accomplish any task in the public sector.

Management of Public Education – Roles

The management of schools is accomplished through a complex interplay of roles played by different key stakeholders. From a ‘positional’ perspective, sometimes, the role of the other stakeholders is seen as ‘interference’. For instance, the majority of the educational managers talks about ‘political interference’. There is hardly any interview or interaction which has not referred to this political interference. Similarly, the majority of the educational managers understands the role of community as interfering or meddling in the school affairs. One of the district officer comments that *‘the role of community is quite negative...most of the time they start interfering in the school’s matter’*.

There is also a lot of confusion regarding the official roles, especially, in the absence of formal JDs. In addition to that, there is a huge disconnect between the espoused roles and the enacted roles. During individual interview, DEO makes a very frank comment: *“Not everything in the policy can be implemented. There is much that is just for policy statements and speeches”*. This disconnect is so wide, clear and established that it is taken as a norm. For example, the speech of Nazim or DOE at any occasion about education is generally not considered on its face value (and my personal experience and general observation also conform this) – there is a pervasive understanding that it is only to serve the purpose of the occasion. The enacted roles can be understood through actions (see the on-job actions of the DEO on a typical day).

Box 4.7: A Typical Day of a DEO

- Attending/ responding to telephone calls
- Meetings with the public
- Meetings with the high officials, such as DCOs
- Official meetings
- Paper work/ desk work called ‘dak’ (post)
- Information collection from lower levels and sending upwards

(Source: Developed by the researcher from field observations)

The data (interviews from multiple sources) reveal that educational managers view it as almost un-challengeable that many of the teachers use political leverage for continued absenteeism. The local politician has real influence in transfer/ postings of teachers which affects the overall rationalization in the district – e.g. see the following comment as an example: *‘There is a lot of pressure for transfer/posting of teachers by the politicians’* (FDG, ADO). The data further indicate that these transfers/ postings are not driven by the needs of the schools; rather, teachers get themselves posted at positions of their convenience, which also gets cross-validated by some existing work (e.g. Asim, 2013). The role of the teacher unions and clerks is also portrayed in the interviews (with relevant examples and anecdotes) as quite negative by a large majority of the educational managers.

The role of the community in education is continuously emphasized since 1990s, and, therefore, School Management Committees (SMCs) have been put in place at most of the schools. Recently, the Education Department has also transferred funds to SMCs, authorizing them to utilize these funds for school development. Despite this official emphasis on community participation, the comments/ observation made by educational managers have not been very encouraging. The educational managers refer to community as *‘illiterate’*, *‘un cooperative’* and *‘only interested in SMC funds’*.

4.6.4 Outcomes of the Activity

Gradually, the mistrust in public schools is getting higher and stronger (as discussed). Even the public school teachers are opting for private schools for their own kids. One of the district managers observes:

The majority of the government school teachers do not send their children to government schools... in terms of percentage...it is something like 90% teachers who do not send their children to the public schools. (DEO, Interview)

When there is no investment of parents...why will they get bothered about the education of their children? All parents who can afford to send their children to private schools do that... they [parents] are not interested in free education. (DEO, Interview)

FGDs with ADOs and supervisors also generate similar responses indicating the failure of the public schooling. The management practice of school education is increasingly being held more responsible for the failure of the public schooling (also evident through some existing

work e.g. Nayyar & Salim, 2006). There are several non-functional schools in the district (the official data indicate). Most of these schools have been created as a political patronage and to usurp the rents and other money associated with the constructions of the new schools and creation of new positions for the staff and, of course, staff's salary (reflected through the interviewee comments; also see Asim, 2013).

The teachers are not rationalized – some schools have poor enrolments but higher number of teachers (posted due to reasons better understood through a political economy's lens) and vice versa. The nature of problems, as the data indicate, associated with school management has only become more intense since the last two decades. *“Now, more teachers do not report to schools; rather, they report to political offices of the politicians”* (FGD, ADO). At a broader level, the policy documents and reports are consistently identifying the same problems and nearly the same solutions. More management positions are allocated on political recommendations and leverages: *“90 % come to management positions through illegal means and through paying bribe, along with political backing, and they have to get their investment back... People naturally like authority and power and enjoy it”* (FGDs, ADOs).

Thus, as mentioned above, the trust of the public in public schooling is decreasing at a faster pace. This is evident in the increasing enrolments in private schools, including higher percentage of children of public school teachers also joining the private schools (which is despite the increased number of reform projects implemented in the district).

The next section discusses in some details the influencing factors – or the factors contributing to the deterioration of the system. These include, for instance, political interference/ influence; the role of NGOs/ INGOs/ Development Sector/ Civil Society; trust deficit in public sector; community's perceptions of education and its importance; inflation and poverty.

4.7 Factors Influencing the Management Practice

The various factors influencing the management practice by the DEO Sindbad are discussed under the following headings/ categories.

4.7.1 Political Interference – Politicians, Teacher Unions/ Associations

‘Lack of political will’ is a consistently and frequently quoted factor (emerging in the data and substantiated by similar observations made in the national educational policies e.g. see that of 2009) influencing public education system in Sindh, in general, and management practice, in particular. The findings of the study indicate that the education in past had been effective because of the importance attached to schools by politicians: “*Earlier, there used to be political vision for the betterment of schools; not any more*”. The comments below (made by various participants of the data generation workshop) reflect the nature of political influence – e.g. exercise/ misuse of power by politicians, teacher unions/ associations, or clerk unions/ associations – and their impact on the provision and quality of education system.

Box 4.8: Nature and Impact of Political Influence

“Earlier, there was no political influence; now, there is political intervention.”

“No political or social interruption in the education system earlier; actively seen now.”

“No political pressure was there in education for any teacher or officer; political pressure is there”.

“No active teacher/ clerks associations earlier; now, they are active”.

“There was no politics in schools. Now politics is active”.

“Schools used to run smoothly in past, but now the political interference is the major problem”.

“5 years ago, supervisors used to work hard because of lack of political intervention...because of limited intervention of unions”.

“There was no interference on part of political parties or unions, earlier. Too many factors interfere in ADO’s work because of which management is not done well – political interference, blackmailing, and many other means of interference”.

“Teacher unions’ and officers’ torture has disabled the supervisor”.

“Rules used to be strictly followed...now, this is not the case...using political influence, anyone can impose their will.”

“Officers used to be honest; not anymore.”

The Box 4.8 indicates how power and politics link with ignorance of rules and encourages corruption. To quote an example, posting from a teaching position to an administrative position is generally seen as a big achievement but usually gets done through using political leverage. There are a few officers only who are/ can be posted directly by the department. Within this context, therefore, the existing DEO takes pride in highlighting that he has been posted without political recommendation (called '*parchi*' or '*sifarish*' in local language): "*I don't have parchi, yet I am a District Education Officer!*" Likewise, the system has allowed teacher unions and clerk associations to also play a rather negative role – in many cases to support the corrupt practices of teachers or to exert influence to negatively impact educational decision making.

In addition to these two groups, the influence of a rapidly emerging third group is also part of the current discourse on political interference – i.e. the role of media. It is interesting to note that media also exerts its influence sometimes through projecting partial image of the educational scenario – influencing decision making and/ or role/ authority of the education officers. The following comment reflects the role of media: "*Media used to encourage educational policies. Media is now criticizing policies*".

4.7.2 Role of NGOs/ INGOs/ Development Sector/ Civil Society

The last three decades have seen a rapid growth of INGOs and NGOs role in the education system. Where there have been positive aspects of such intervention (e.g. foreign aid), there have also been many negative influences, which are discussed in some detail below. Some of the comments made by participants in this regard are quite insightful:

There wasn't any such environment of foreign and NGOs. Now, it has badly affected the whole system.

Earlier there were no NGOs, now you can see them in some official meetings too.

NGOs are only for money and are also corrupting others.

NGOs copy agenda from west and paste here.

Donors are also promoting NGOs for their objectives.

The data indicate that educational managers seem to assert that the rapid and extensive increase in the role/ influence of INGOs have had negative impact on the role/ authority/ responsibility of the local government/ education department. The above data also indicates NGOs' role in the prevailing corruption and lethargy in the system. Probably, the 'easy money' from donors and NGOs has replaced the intrinsic motivation (i.e. to work for better education) with extrinsic motivation (i.e. allowances and possibilities for corruption in the name of physical infrastructure development and purchase/ procurement). In addition to above, since the reform agenda has been 'imported', much of the intervention has resulted in the wastage of resources and efforts. For instance, more often than not, the same person gets selected for various trainings because of the heavy allowances that have been made part of the training and/ or the fact that similar interventions have been made by multiple donors, not well coordinated to ensure effective use of input and resources. This means that the development sector has largely contributed to the existing disconnect between organizational purposes and 'other purposes'. The above data/ comments get validated by the findings of some existing studies conducted to explore the impact of donor interventions on the public education sector in Sindh (e.g. see Mohammad & Kumari, 2009).

4.7.3 Socio-economic Conditions

There are other conditions and factors influencing school management in the district – these inter-connected factors include poverty, community's perceptions about education and trust in the public sector education.

There was no such poverty. Now poverty has badly affected us. This is the primary reason for low enrolment.

There are the general perceptions about the alarming increase in poverty and inflation in the country. Within this context, it is difficult to imagine the families living below the poverty line to be taking interest in their child's education, when they can, instead, send their children to earn. The educational managers consider 'poverty' as an important factor in the low enrollment in the public sector; this may, however, be linked more closely to the issue of 'lack of trust' in public sector education and the overall value of education that in the society: *"When most of the government teachers send their kids to private schools, then, why others*

will do that?” (Comment by a senior education officer; though a number of interviewees shared this perception).

As mentioned above (and evident through personal interactions and work with/ in the education sector), the public/ community has lost trust in the public system in general and public education system in particular. They have lost faith that public system would ever improve or perform or provide quality education. Since, now, even the lower strata of society (e.g. maids) do not send their children to the public sector; this also implies that there is further decrease in the demand/ pressure for quality education; thus, resulting in less accountability in the system, in general and, therefore, continued decline of the system.

“The Department has made several efforts to engage community – but the community is simply not interested”. Community’s perceptions about the role of education in the betterment of their lives are, by and large, not very positive. An important explaining factor could be that they link education strongly to the economic benefits and employability, which even after getting higher education is not ensured in a system where corruption and nepotism are now acceptable norms (a common observation reflected in a large number of writings on the subject). Furthermore, the overall trust-deficit in the public education system and the increased poverty (as discussed earlier) – these contribute to a limited view of education and its benefits. Overall, the data explain the consequent feeling of ‘powerless-ness’ of educational officers, especially, when it comes to finding the solutions to educational problems.

4.8 Conclusion

The case study indicates that the management practice (activity system) has evolved in several ways. For instance, the engagement with the official/ given object has considerably reduced; the disconnect between official and perceived object has intensified; new concepts (tools) such as ‘teacher on visa’ and ‘*parchi* system’, have emerged and been strengthened in the educational management, indicating the dominant direction of collective learning; the politicization of most of the organizational processes is more pervasive; and much stronger articulation of the ‘unwritten rules’ that promote lethargy, submission and compliance at work place and provide stronger justification for avoidance of responsibility and engagement with the organizational purpose.

The supervision of schools, as one of the very critical components of the educational management practice, has evolved in the following ways: a) there have now been very few

school visits; b) the scope of supervision has gotten reduced – there has hardly been any attention to the teaching and learning processes; and c) the purpose of the school visits has, in most cases, shifted from improving schools to other agendas (including personal gains or political mileage). The limited engagement of the educational managers is also evident through the ‘narrowing’ of the curriculum’. In majority of the schools, the co-curricular activities have become extinct.

The case study also indicates that ‘reporting’ and ‘information collection’ have gradually become more significant; in fact, as the key concern/ engagement at different levels of management. This ‘information focus’ is quite divorced from genuine concerns regarding quality of teaching-learning processes; there is, furthermore, no accountability attached to the poor educational outcomes.

Overall, the issue of power seems to have occupied most of the cognitive and action space in the DEOs. Now, the primary attention of the district education managers is to manage the politics and power with the existing power centers as well as the emerging ones – now, a greater number of teachers is using political leverages. The case study indicates links of power to corruption in the sector, such as drawing salary without attending the workplace. Paradoxically, power is also producing dis-empowerment at all levels of educational management, yet the management positions are very prized ones, as these open up the possibilities of ensuring personal gains and enhanced social status.

The current chapter (Four) presented an in-depth analysis of district administration in an attempt to address the question of how the school education is managed, and in what ways have the management practices evolved over a period of time. The case study shows that the desired (official/ given object) outcomes of the management activity have either deteriorated or diminished. For example, now, the public or community has lost trust in the public education system to an extent that the majority of the public school teachers sends their children to private schools; whereas, networks supporting corrupt practices have become stronger on the other hand. The analysis is based on CHAT and aims to contribute to enhancing understanding of OL in the public sector in Pakistan.

To explore whether the findings generated by this in-depth study of the case of OL in the DEO (presented in Chapter Four) are consistent or divergent with reference/ in comparison to the other district education offices in Sindh, the next chapter (Chapter Five) presents the analysis and discussion of the data generated through the Data Generation Workshops conducted with district education officials/ managers (and other key stakeholders)

of a large number of various districts in the province Sindh (see details regarding methodology in Chapter Two).

CHAPTER FIVE

Pattern Seeking – Reporting Findings from Other Data Sets
(Research Findings – Phase III)

The previous chapter (Chapter 4) generated insights regarding the case of district education management practice in Sindh. However, it is important to explore whether these findings are similar to or different for the other district education offices in Sindh. Therefore, as discussed in Chapter Two (Research Design), to respond to the research question (RQ2), ‘Does the management practice in one district have similar pattern/ resonance in other districts in the province (Sindh), too?’, a number of Data Generation Workshops have been conducted with different educational managers across the province. In these data generation workshops, a variety of qualitative tools have been used to generate relevant insights. The current chapter (5), therefore, is organised in such a way that each of the subsequent four sections (Sections 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4) presents the findings and analysis of the data generated through each of the four tools respectively. These sections are listed below:

- Section 5.1: Analysis of Organisational Images
- Section 5.2: Analysis of Organisational Roles
- Section 5.3: Analysis of Organisational Discourse
- Section 5.4: Narrative Analysis of Management Practice/ Analysis of Situated or Organizational Experiences.

5.1 Analysis of Organisational Images/ Metaphors

Metaphors/ organizational images, as discussed in detail in Chapter Two, serve as useful tools to generate useful insights in relation to the management and organization theory – the usefulness of metaphors in exploring multiple perspectives provides the rationale for generating and analyzing metaphors/ images as an important method and tool for the study. The analysis of rich data generated through metaphors helps in understanding the mental models of the educational managers about the ‘object’ of the school management activity system. The educational managers have been asked to draw their images of ‘management’ (for details, see Chapter Two).

The current section (5.1) presents the summary, analysis and synthesis of the dominant images of ‘Management’ held by the educational managers. In the following paragraphs, this section will, first, present and discuss some representative metaphors to illustrate dominant perspectives on management. Second, a summary data of the visual metaphors will be presented in Table 5.1 along with original (translated) description of the

images provided by the respondents. Finally, the key conclusions for this section will be provided.

One of the major, most consistent and dominant images that emerge from the data is that of ‘management’ being viewed/ described only in terms of official hierarchy (depicting the national culture), where officer- in-charge (e.g. EDOs or DOEs) are placed at the top (see Images 5.1 and 5.2 below). Official hierarchy is highlighted to an extent that one of the images depicts that even thinking can only take place at the DEO level. However, this official image is not linked to any learning outcomes.

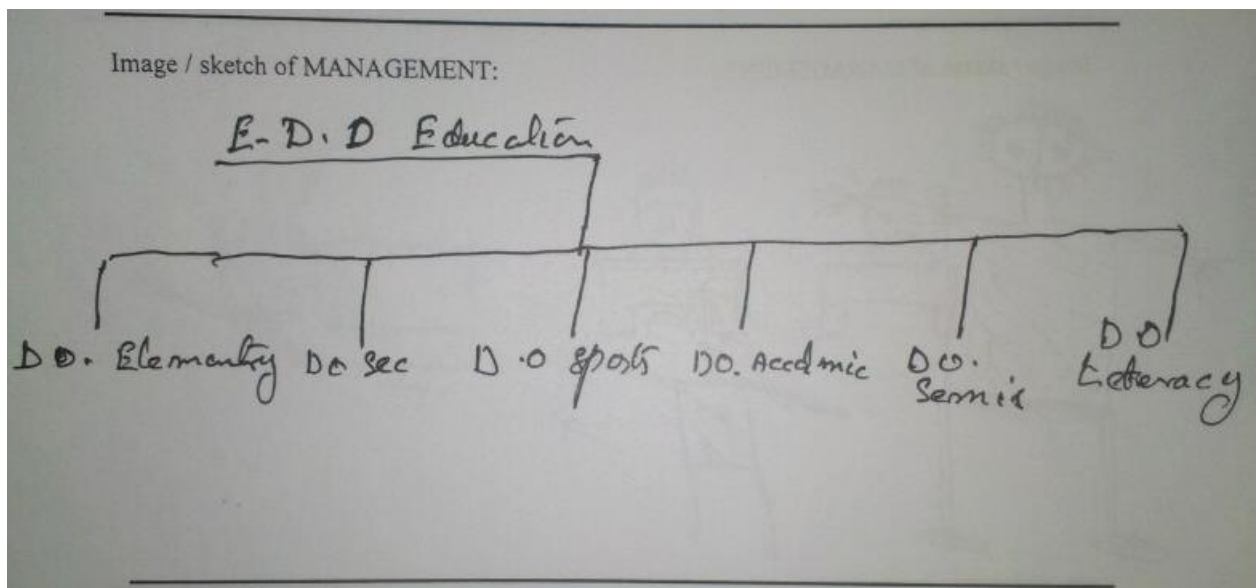


Fig. 5.1: Image 1 of ‘Management’

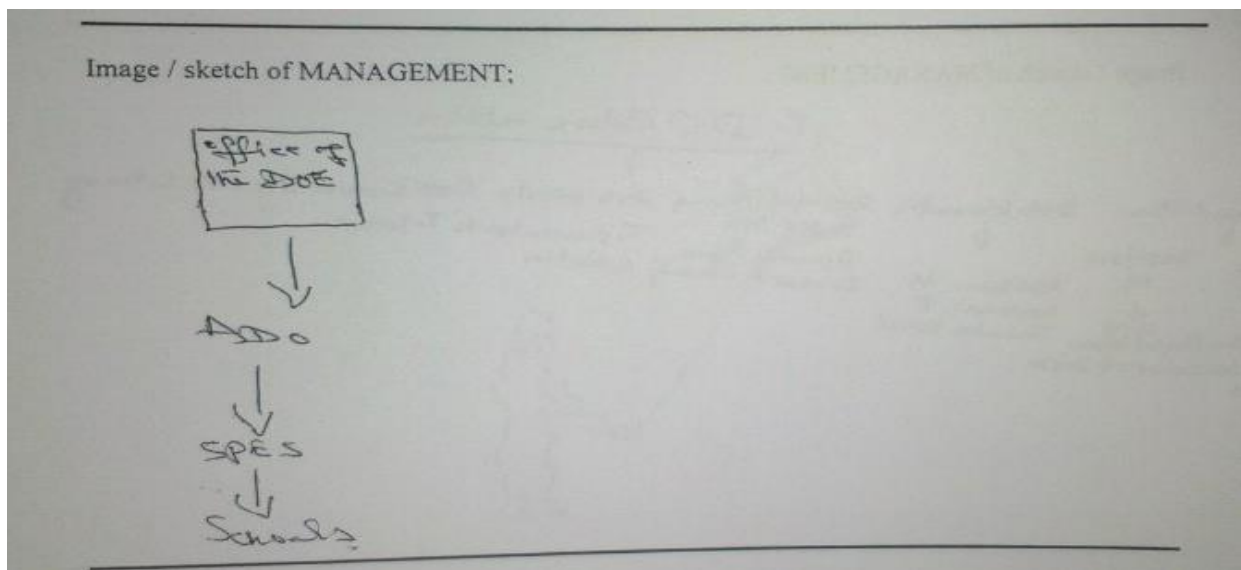


Fig. 5.2: Image 2 of ‘Management’

Fig. 5.1 refers to office of the Executive District Officer Education (EDOE) as head of other district educational officers such as District Officer (DO) Elementary [Education], DO Secondary [Education], and other DOs. While Fig. 5.2 refers to the office of DO (Elementary Education) with downward hierarchy, such as Sub-District Officer, Supervisors of Primary Educations (SPEs) and Schools. The link of higher level of authority to the next level of authority is clearly one-way i.e., from top to bottom. This seems to be key defining feature of educational management in the public sector of Pakistan. Almost every data set and earlier studies, directly or indirectly, refer to this situation/ perception. There was, however, one particular case, where the EDO was not shown as someone at the top, but as roots of the tree.

Another most dominating discourse that the images depict is that of management as ‘embodied power’. This is one of the most frequently portrayed images. DOE’s sketch is that of a mature, experienced or more powerful and BIG person. The sub-ordinates are shown as small needing support of the management. Through this image, the managers’ role is depicted as hand holding for the less powerful school subordinates. Fig 5.3 is presented here to illustrate the point. When it comes to the national culture, another defining feature is its being quite patriarchal in nature. Not surprisingly, patriarchy is also reflected in the images drawn – that is, depicting manager as a person, and that also a male.



Fig. 5.3: Image 3 of ‘Management’

In one case where DOE is depicted as a central point in the umbrella, it is also to highlight the significance of DOE in the organisational hierarchy. Power discourse is also evident where

management is described in terms of ‘control’ through rules and regulations. Power and authority feature in many ways – e.g. sometimes, through the seating arrangement and discourse of ‘order’ (i.e. manager orders this or that, and the school management is required to follow orders). Submission and obeying orders are characteristic features of the national and, thereby, the bureaucratic organisational culture also – this is the very reason why penalizing lack of obedience also emerged as part of the organisational discourse portrayed through the sketches.

Fig 5.4 represents the concern that the school should function properly because of the expected arrival of the Minister/ Political figure. In the context of power and poor conditions of average level of school functioning, the image is very meaningful where educational manager is deeply concerned for the ‘ok’ visit of a political figure. By and large, more powerful figures demand more protocols and more activities to ensure their ‘approvals’.

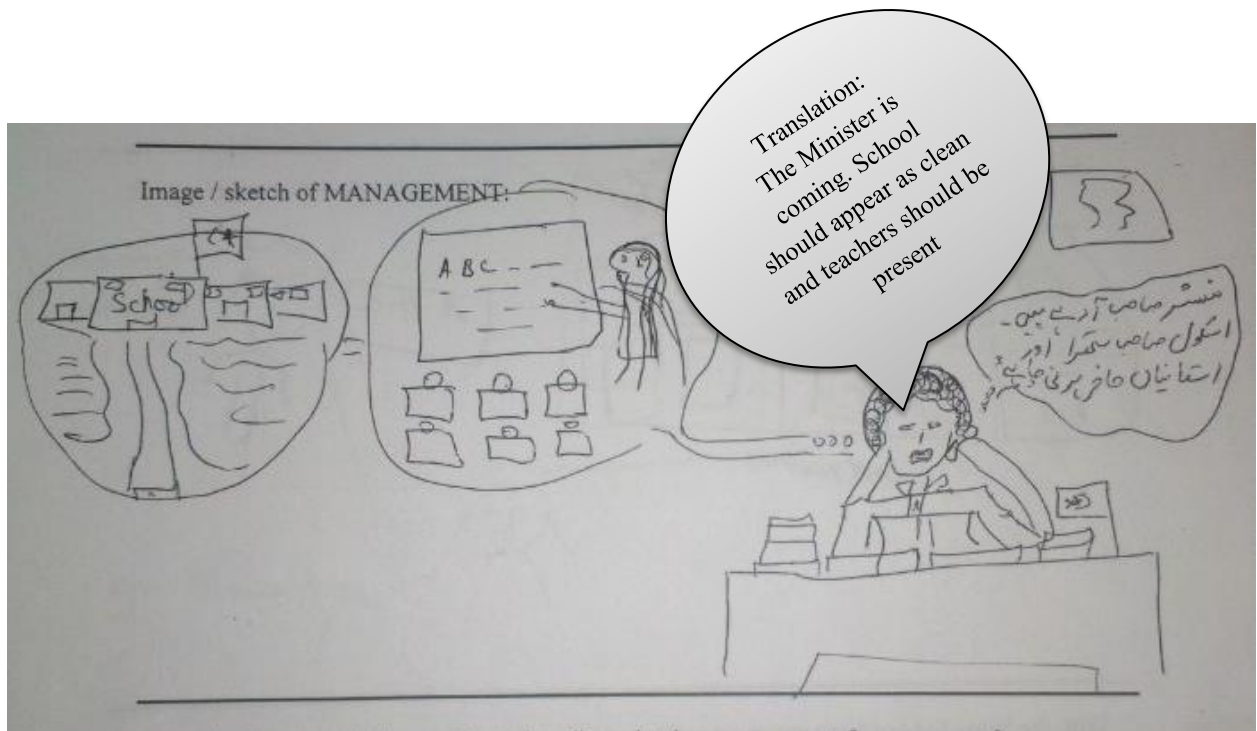


Fig. 5.4: Image 4 of ‘Management’

Continuing with the power/ authority discourse, there is one image where the manager has been depicted as a powerless person, as a disempowered individual. This is a representative image of all situations, where disconnect between the un-official power (generally local politician) and official authority is huge. In a similar vein, two other images depict management as a painful process (as ‘headache’), and not a desirable thing. One also

highlights the management failure, which seems in alignment with other findings showing that district management has failed to serve the purpose for which they have been created.

Then, another larger category of images portray DOEs as functional hierarchy, and management is defined in terms of functions. Functions (as the data sets reflect) that get frequent mention are: ‘problem solving’, ‘coordination’, and ‘cooperation’. Many images portray management as problem solving and if we analyze these images in the broader context i.e. in relation to the other data sets, we realize that problems referred here are not ‘educational’ problems or student related; rather, problems are teachers’ salary, the fuel for DOEs cars, transportation, and others. Likewise, coordination and cooperation are frequently mentioned and are reflective of the overall culture of fragmentation. In effect, cooperation analyzed within the broader culture of corruption implies not to create any hindrance for corruption to take place i.e. cooperation is also viewed as compliance.

Some other functions that get highlighted in the data generated are: Inspection, monitoring, evaluation (appraisal), supply of learning materials, budget provision, and the conduct of examination. Some mention planning function as well. Appropriate hiring/appointment are also highlighted. Other functions that are mentioned once or twice are: decision making, follow up, reporting, governance, discipline, and student absenteeism. A rare mention (and that is quite inconsistent with the other data sets also) is that of ‘transformative leadership’, to inspire’ or ‘dare’ – this implies that these are highlighted as desirable fundamental functions of management, as aspirations rather than the situation on ground. At least, three respondents indicated result-orientation, result-driven or result-focused as important requirements of management. Adaptability also gets mentioned once only.

Fig. 5.5 is a specific example that portrays the DOEs as general ‘offices’ rather than as educational set-ups.

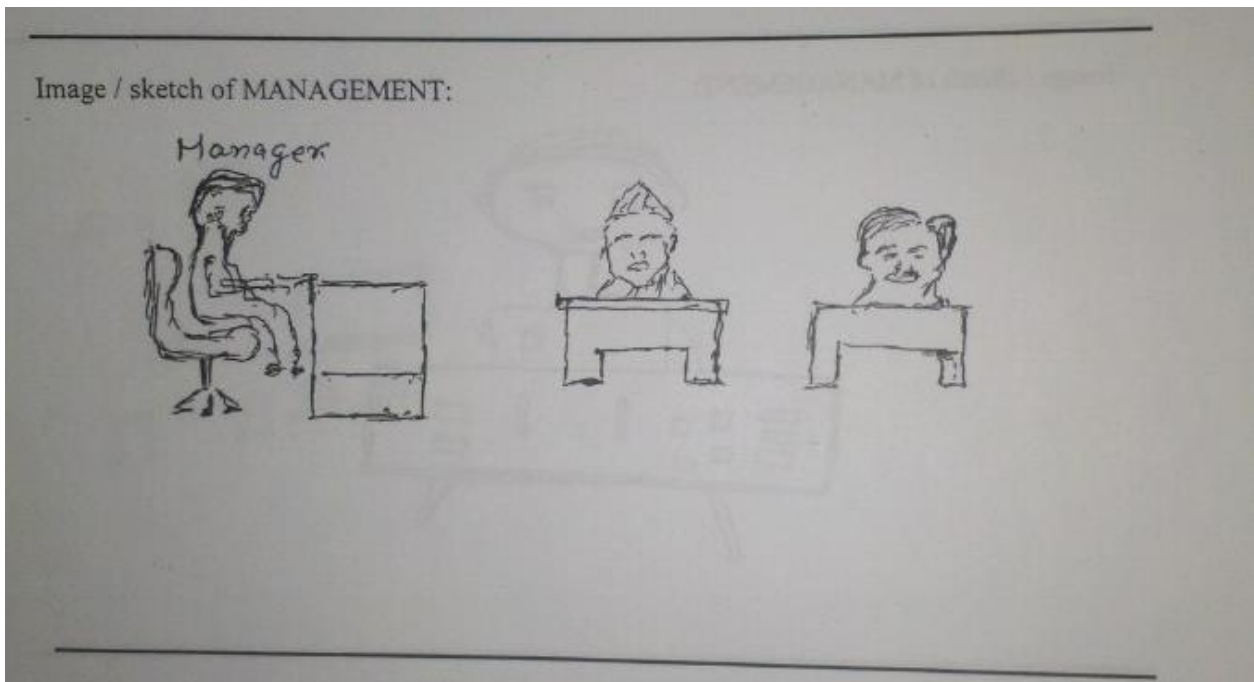


Fig. 5.5: Image 5 of ‘Management’

The images/ sketched drawn by educational managers dominantly are those of offices, not of schools, nor of offices attached to schools. Their main function is depicted as office work rather than educational work. Likewise, manager’s role is depicted as holding meetings; there are quite a few images that depict this role of a manager. Some images portray DOE as a postman, who sends down orders from the higher authority so that these could go down to the grassroots level. This image of postman echoes well the existing metaphors of management at DOE. The dominant images, nevertheless, conceptualise and/ or portray the role of DOE quite narrowly – i.e. checking, monitoring, ordering, or as a postman. There were very few images that took a broader view of management, where perceptions of object included improvement of classrooms and school also. Overall, student learning outcomes remain undermined. Analysis of some of the images clearly indicates that often the focus remained on concerns with physical facilities, which highlights the resource-dependence of management. A few images also used ‘Growth/ Nature’ metaphor (e.g. tree), where DOE was portrayed as a tree trunk to show that all depends on this office. This image may be interpreted as organic version of official hierarchy. Likewise, management as organs of human body/ system was also used to highlight the relative significance of different elements of education. Similarly, machine metaphor – e.g. DOE as car, and manager as a driver, has also been used to highlight the need for appropriate hiring at/ for this position (district management).

The Table 5.1 presents a summary of images, followed by analysis and discussion of key findings. Overall, the data show that there are six key conceptualizations of the DEOs. These are: *Management as ‘Power/ Hierarchy’*; *Management as Status and Power/ Resources*; *Management as Function/ Performance*; *Management as Problem*; *Management as Organism*; and *Management as Educational Infrastructure*.

The data indicate that the image of ‘Management as power’ has two variations: a) where power is seen more in terms of an official hierarchy, b) where the notion of power is aligned more to the cultural understanding of power – i.e., to have access to more resources and being a ‘macho man’. The image of ‘management as function’ has mainly been presented through the concept/ mind map of management/ manager. In some cases, management has also been portrayed as a problem which indicates the tensions associated with management and the pressures exerted by different stakeholders on the managers. In cases where management has been conceptualized as an ‘organism’ rather than as official hierarchy, the sketches drawn by the respondents mainly use ‘tree’ as a metaphor. One set of images has portrayed management more in terms of educational images. The details of these images/ sketches are described in the Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Summary of Metaphors/ Images of Management

Images	Description by the Participants (Education Managers)
<i>Management as ‘Power/ Hierarchy’</i> (reflective of the national culture)	<i>Key points:</i>
<i>The Most Frequent Image:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve education development • Provide missing basic facilities to students and schools
Organogram/ Organizational Chart/ Hierarchy running down from DOE or DCO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply literacy material in their district school • Listen to school problems and address them • Leader of the district education • District Officer is a manager, officer (schools/institutions work under their management) • Inspection and management of school
<i>One Notable Variation:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide teacher development training
Names of different levels of education hierarchy in separate boxes under the label ‘ Education Department’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address problems • Management should be like gardening (growth-oriented explanation) • Look after all educational cases of schools • Coordination with civil society and education department

Images	Description by the Participants (Education Managers)
	(mentioned once at least)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting primary and middle grade exams • To put the things in their right place • Cooperation and coordination among all employees working in an institution is a must/ Better coordination through meetings • Everyone should know their job description
Management as Status and Power/ Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The best manager will obey his leader and convey instruction of higher-ups to the subordinates; their advice will move down to the grassroots level through better management and manager
<i>Images Portrayed:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing a manager with a telephone on a small table • Image of a manager (male) with schools • Sketches of a manager sitting on revolving chair with a big table in front of him while two subordinates are also shown using a desk style table • A manager holding a meeting across a large table • Image of macho man • A BIG man helping a small one • Sketches of a BIG manager showing a small subordinate and a colleague • Sketch of a car (department) with manager as a driver, gas tank as budget and road (target) • Sketch of an umbrella, having 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The manager manages education system • A perfect manager makes the work perfect and on time. All the tables are clear • To drive an institution, every person should be placed in his proper place • A best manager is one who is a good leader • Manager is a great power • Manager should be powerful • Manager is hardworking and powerful person • His order is order • A manager first thinks something, then he or she works on those things/matters with the help of staff • Organize the improvement of education in district • He always looks after the schools and visits the schools • He solves the difficulties and problems of schools, teachers, peons and <i>chowkidars</i> (gatekeepers) • Helping and guiding the teachers • Noting down and resolving the problems of teachers • Send teachers to classroom • Provide reading, writing and audio visual materials • check the register

Images	Description by the Participants (Education Managers)
DOE in between, revolved by terms like, ADOE, supervisor, society, superintendent, senior clerk, junior clerk, driver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • run school properly • Coordination with subordinates • He cooperates and coordinates with the educational team • He runs his office with the help of his subordinates • A good manager is who, who always works with the help of his or her subordinates • Discipline • Best educational environment • Academic competency • Making things right by cooperation • Improve the quality • Check and Balance • Follow up • Asking about student's absenteeism • Asking about information within 24 hours • Asking about stopped salary of <i>chowkidar</i> (gatekeeper) and ordering to release it immediately • Work in group for the betterment of the department • A district office is like an umbrella under which all educational officials of district work together; they cooperate with each other as their assignments are linked to each other for effective working of district office, it is mandatory that all officials should work with cooperation and coordination
<i>Management as Function/ Performance</i> Concept/ Mind map of a Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The concept of management in my opinion should be according to the environment; easy to adopt and get fruitful results in limited time • Management is somewhat a mechanism to arrange the things to make complete updated goal thorough skills, coordination, monitoring and evaluation, planning and policy and effective supervision • To put things in order is the better management • It creates transformative leaders, who are inspiring and

Images	Description by the Participants (Education Managers)
	daring
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fundamental function of a manager is to make planning, by which we can get our targets easily, by doing such type of management we may be able to be a changed person To manage things properly To monitor and evaluate the assessment of institutions To provide sufficient budget to institutions To make the future planning as per need To make coordination between all officers/stakeholders
Management as Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management means headache At present, manager is confused and disappointed person - he does not know what should he do? He cannot work for the desired goal of education How should he face different issues when he is, in fact, powerless?
Sketch of a person, holding his head with both his hands	
Management as Organism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the leader cares for the tree, it will provide better fruits If he or she is careless about the tree, the tree will be fruitless The management is a skill of organization, planning, target achieving, fixing responsibilities, jointly supporter, evaluating, monitoring and providing result oriented out comes for producing/ establishing civil society with good governance There is a tree; the root of the tree is just like an EDOE The stem shows a DOE The branches are ADOEs and teachers Flowers and fruits are like students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools as roots and education department as trunk Management shown as a tree with branches as functions/ objectives Sketch of a garden with a gardener EDO as roots of a Tree 	
Management as Educational Infrastructure	In the above mentioned concept:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sketch of school building with a list of materials and an equation: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Material, things, persons are very essential to run a school Manager is the leading person to fix its directions

Images	Description by the Participants (Education Managers)
head teacher = manager	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sketch (picture) of a manager, which labelled as follows: Brain: curriculum, Eyes: monitoring, Hands: teachers, Wearing: students, Body: school, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the system of something • To control the system according to rules and regulations • To manage the things in proper manner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sketches of classrooms, blackboard, teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help the subordinates • To improve their ability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sketches of school building, classroom, and head mistress shown under stress with a thinking bubble ‘minister is coming...school should be clean and all teacher should be present’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work for the school/teacher/student • Cooperative personality • Work for all (institution and head teachers) • Improve the quality of education

Table 5.1 presents the summary of the images/ metaphors and their description, as provided by the educational managers during the data generation workshops. The table indicates various competing conceptualizations of the object – i.e. school management. The dominant conceptualizations refer to educational management as: power and status; official hierarchy; general management functions; and control over resources. Some images also refer to educational infrastructure and outcomes.

The images/ metaphors held by educational managers depict various tensions in the activity system (i.e. management of school education in the districts). These tensions are rooted in disconnect between the management image (working model) of a manager and organizational purpose i.e. – formal object of the activity system. For example, viewing educational management as an administrative function means being concerned with budget, physical resources, official correspondence, task completion, getting data (mostly numbers) for record keeping, checking, and monitoring absenteeism (while educational management focus more on educational outcomes).

5.2 Analysis of Organisational Roles

The examination of the object of the activity system, as discussed earlier, is very crucial for an understanding of the system. One pertinent approach to study the conceptualization and

enactment of the object is through investigating subject's perceptions of their roles and challenges faced in the enactment of these roles. In order to understand the managers' role perceptions and enactment, they have been asked to highlight the key aspects of their jobs that they like the most, and the ones that they find challenging (see Chapter 2 for details). The current section (5.2) presents a summary of the desirable aspects or dimensions of the district education managers' roles as managers as perceived and reported by them (in Sub-section 5.2.1), followed by an analysis of the data; whereas, Sub-section 5.2.2 presents challenges faced by the DEOs in fulfilling their responsibilities followed by a discussion of these findings. Concluding remarks are offered at the end of this chapter.

5.2.1 'Management' Role Perceptions of District Education Managers – Positive/ Desirable Aspects of Work

What educational managers like about their jobs can be described in terms of six major categories, reflective of their aspirations and may be experiences.

Sense of Power and Authority: “I feel like a *king* during job” – this captures their dominant aspirations. It seems to indicate that the district manager's role gives them a sense of power and authority. The comment or aspiration is also reflective of their perceptions of the school heads: the schools heads or teachers could then be seen as their subjects?

Monitoring, Checking, Supervision: In alignment with the above, the key dimensions that they like about their work dominantly involve monitoring; evaluation or checking (e.g. regularity of staff, teachers, students; discipline in schools); verification of curriculum completion; school supervision; reporting about school teachers; check school record; etc. Some highlighted their interest in the “resource supervision”, “school visits” and “check training centers on behalf of EDOs”.

As A Problem Solver: Many of the district education managers mentioned “problem solving” as an aspect that they really liked about their jobs. This is reflected in statements such as: “sharing problem with head teachers”, “solving teachers' problems”. Now, this could have its roots in two possible sources of motivation: a genuine interest in solving their problems assuming the role of facilitator or a sense of superiority which comes in when one assumes a position/ competence to solve others' problems. For instance the statements, “guide the junior

staff”, “give knowledge to teachers when they have no knowledge” could be seen as reflective of their feeling of being in a superior/ better position.

Interactions, Networking and Representation: Interactions with “people” in general, “teachers and students”, “NGOs”, and “good teachers” – this was another set of responses with similar emphasis as the above two categories. Moreover, attending seminars or meetings on behalf EDO or other higher ups was also mentioned as desirable aspect of work.

Educational Improvement/ Growth or Development: Interestingly, this emerged as the second most frequently quoted category of responses, which is reflected in their statements about the desirable aspects of their job e.g. “growth in education”, “role/ improvement in education”, “education, learning and development”, “when I get to meet any good teacher during surprise visit”, “to make students effective”, “to help teachers in effective teaching”, “honesty”, “hard work”, “everything which is in the favor of school and community”, etc.

Planning/ Office Work: Many of the managers mentioned planning and office related work aspects as desirable dimension of their jobs, which is reflected in the examples that they provided of desirable aspects e.g. “work plan”, “development and planning schemes (PC1)”, “annual school census”, “action plan for development schemes”, “good management and planning in my office”, etc.

The Table 5.2 below summarizes the main responses made by the district education managers about the perceived positive aspects of their role as DEO.

Table 5.2: Management Role Perceptions of District Education Managers

Positive Aspect	Variations/ Versions/ Other Articulations
<i>Sense of Power and Authority</i>	“I feel like a <i>king</i> during job” , “Punctuality and regularity of staff”, “improve my office work and advice staff to remain punctual and regular”, “Maintain discipline in schools”
<i>Monitoring, Checking, Supervision</i>	“resource supervision”, “check training centers on behalf of EDOs”, “school visits”, “Reporting about school”, “Verification of curriculum completion”
<i>As A Problem Solver</i>	“problem solving”, “solving teachers’ problems”, “guide the junior

staff”, “give knowledge to teachers when they have no knowledge”, “To resolve issue of students in crises

Interactions, Networking and Representation “Communication with people and higher ups” , “attending seminars or meetings on behalf EDO” “teachers and students”, “NGOs”, and “good teachers

Improvement/ Growth or Development “doing everything which is in the favor of school and community”, “growth in education”, “role/ improvement in education”, “education, learning and development”, “when I get to meet any good teacher during surprise visit”, “to make students effective”, “to help teachers in effective teaching”, “honesty”, “hard work”

Planning/ Office Work preparing work plan/ development and planning schemes (PC1)”, “annual school census”, “action plan for development schemes”, “good management and planning in my office”, etc.

5.2.2 ‘Education Management’ – Key Challenges and Constraints: A Synthesis

The major categories of challenges (as represented also through the data presented in Table 5.3) are discussed below in some detail.

Power and Politics: This emerges as a major category that represents the key challenges faced by the educational managers. This finding is consistent across all the other data sets, too. A number of observations can be made regarding the challenges identified under this category; these are described below.

The political interference (i.e. interference of politicians and influence of politics) has increased in education. It implies that the political interference has gradually increased in intensity as well as breadth and scope e.g. in schools, at offices, in decision making, in relation to teacher recruitment, transfer and posting. In addition to political interference, there are various other power groups, influential groups and individuals or pressure groups that exert their influence on the officers and the decision making – these pressure groups include, for example, teacher unions/ bodies, influential people (e.g. *waderas* or tribal heads), etc. The political interference and interference by influential people have negatively affected education – its provision and quality.

Authority: Embedded within the discourse of power is the discourse of Authority. Due to this interference, the district education managers are not able to take any independent decisions, nor exert their authority, nor stop malpractices (e.g. stop absentees or disinterested teachers from negatively influencing the educational processes), etc. In instances, where they do take some action against corrupt practices, they get penalized for it. This observation is quite consistent with the data quoted elsewhere – that the committed and honest district education managers feel disempowered and helpless because though they have been assigned positions/ roles of authority and portfolio to take decisions, the sphere where they can take any positive actions is quite limited – often, they do not have the authority to transfer the school peons (not working or involved in corrupt practices) because of the interference of the politicians or other influential people of the district (the peon may be one of their political workers or somehow related).

Paucity of Resources (especially Physical): The third major category of challenges faced by the educational managers at the district level is lack of funds and physical resources. For instance, they refer to lack of funds or transportation facilities which create barriers for them in fulfilling their duties, especially, in relation to school visits/ inspection. This emphasis is quite consistent across the other data sets and findings of other studies conducted on public sector educational management (e.g. see Muhammad & Kumari, 2009). Inspection culture has reduced to an extent that it probably does not take place in many districts, and the common reason (or excuse) has been the long distances and lack of transport and fuel (despite the fact that in all major donor funded educational projects, the major emphasis of procurements has remained on buying vehicles). There is some mention of missing school facilities such as toilets and water – there are many evidences that many schools in Sindh and other parts of Pakistan run in extreme challenging situations of extreme weather conditions and extreme resource limitations. However, there are also evidences (reported in studies, e.g. Muhammad & Kumari, 2005) that the relevant educational leaders (school heads, supervisors/ learning coordinators or district education managers) have been resourceful enough that they made creative use of the existing resources or generated more resources through the involvement of the community or the influential people in the locality.

The main problem with the prevailing discourse is that there is too much emphasis on lack of availability of physical resources and too little focus on personal motivation, efforts or commitment or the desire to improve the quality of education. One of the comments above

highlights lack of modern facilities – such focus has shifted emphasis from the purpose and use of resources to the availability of resources per say.

Procedurals: The fourth big category of challenges identifies processes and procedures that create barriers for managers. For instance, delay in release of funds/ payments; limited budget allocation for critical dimensions; use of outdated/ traditional procedures for office work (despite the availability of new, efficient, technology-based ways), which causes delays and inefficiencies within the system. This observation is also quite consistent across other data sets. For instance, though each office has available to them computer and email access (and the managers and staff also receive ICT training), the communication still takes place through traditional means of dispatching letters, which are often received by the relevant authorities/ stakeholders much after the time of the event. The release and procurement processes are also such that the planned activities often get much delayed.

Lack of Teacher Commitment and/ or Competence: The challenges identified around this category are reflected in other data sets as well. For instance, teacher absenteeism (ghost teachers or ‘Visa System’), irregularities, or disinterest have been quoted elsewhere as well. Teacher incompetence, in addition to their attitude, creates constraints; however, the difficult aspect of the situation is that they can neither be penalized for their corrupt practices nor be stopped from negatively influencing the educational processes and outcomes due to the interference of the influential people. Some resourceful DOEs do mention how they find ways of tackling with these issues, but those are few examples - the larger scenario remains affected by this issue.

Unjust/ Unfair Treatment: A system affected by corruption and malpractices is likely to serve as a context where treatment remains unjust or unfair. The biggest example cited is where honest, sincere or committed managers or leaders can get transferred even for doing the right things. As already discussed, ‘transfer’ is used as a tool for exercise of power and authority by influential people. Furthermore, the influence is also exerted on decisions regarding scholarships for talented students. The example of students using unfair means in the examination (and, therefore, depriving the talented and deserving students) is a very common finding consistent across all other data sets/ observations.

Indifferent Community/ Parents: Another major challenge, as reported by the district managers, is lack of awareness on part of the parents and community and/ or indifferent or disinterested community. This finding is partially consistent when compared across findings. Some other data sets (e.g. see discourse analysis of FAQs/ FUS directed at the educational managers by the community) indicate that among the various other groups quoted (e.g. politicians, higher authorities and school heads), community was the only category of stakeholders who were concerned about their children's education, as reflected through their frequently asked questions or comments (in the previous section). It is evident that parents are bound to be different from other groups, as it is about their children's education. It is also quite evident that the significance of community's role as a pressure/ influential group (for positive educational outcomes) has been identified across data sets; however, the observation regarding community's indifference may be interpreted in three ways: a) unaware parents community who do not know what is rightfully theirs and how such 'rightful' claims can be made, b) lack of trust in the government and her efforts, c) a divided community – often, due to ethnic, religious or tribal clashes, the communities get divided and their time is spent in fighting against each other instead of fighting for quality education and for their rights to better future for their children.

Human Resource Deficit: The challenge around human resource deficit has been discussed in terms of either lack of commitment or lack of competence. The reasons for lack of commitment have been variously discussed above (e.g. non-deserving appointees/ political appointees and, therefore, disinterested teachers, etc.). The reason for lack of competence has been related to trainings – either lack of training or inefficient training; the latter may be true especially since 80's, the infiltration of training offered through donor-funded projects in Sindh in particular and Pakistan in general has developed a 'training culture', where the focus and emphasis seem to have shifted from training for professional development and educational improvement to training for the sake of training and personal gains (e.g. training allowances). This is evident in the fact that often the same person reappears in all trainings, relevant or not, but their enrolment in the programme is ensured through personal or political influence. Relevance of training, implementation, follow up and impact are related issues and these have been highlighted in various other studies (e.g. see Mohammad, Vazir, Kumari & Hassan, 2007, which analyse the impact of donor-funded educational projects on teacher education in Sindh).

Non-availability of Learning Materials: The examples discussed under this category are quite consistent across other data sets. Despite huge funding available to the government for provision of free textbooks to the public sector, the students often do not get the textbooks on time or do not get the textbooks at all. Various factors provide explanation for this, including the overall culture of corruption, the procedural delays and system's inefficiencies.

The Table 5.3 below presents a summary of the key challenges identified (translated version), which are organized in the order of frequent mention.

Table 5.3: Challenges faced by the District Education Managers

Challenge/ Category	Variations/ Versions/ Other Articulations
Power & Politics	<p>“Politics has increased in schools and offices.”</p> <p>“Undue political force is used for teachers appointment, posting. This really is killing education.”</p> <p>“Political interference/ Pressure”, “influence of influential people”</p> <p>“Politics has increased in schools and offices and it should be disallowed.”</p> <p>“Interference of politically strong people in the process of education.”</p> <p>“Political interference is a hurdle for DOEs to perform independently.”</p> <p>“Some difficulties are because of politics as some teachers get undue recommendations and remain absent from schools.”</p> <p>“Teachers’ bodies are pressing officers for different decisions.”</p> <p>“Teachers Union and other political interference create a lot of difficulties because self-selected people remain above the duty and education officers cannot do anything.”</p> <p>“Many officers and teachers only pass time at their schools; neither warnings nor punishment works for them because they have support from politics so an officer warning them receives punishment instead.”</p> <p>“Tribal/ Wadera (landlords) System... Sometimes meddling into educational matters by officers and political leaders creates a lot of difficulties.”</p> <p>“How to satisfy politicians, higher ups and influential to let DOEs work according to government policy.”</p>
Authority	<p>“We may give freehand.”</p> <p>“There is no permission to appoint teachers.”</p> <p>“Teachers are not performing their duties properly and DOE can’t take action for various reasons.”</p>

Challenge/ Category	Variations/ Versions/ Other Articulations
Paucity of Resources: Funds, Transport, Basic facilities (Usually in the same order)	<p>“Lack of funds”</p> <p>“Allocation of budget is not effective”</p> <p>“Non-allocation of funds”</p> <p>“Lack of funds hinders the process of giving gifts to students”</p> <p>“In Khuzdar (area in Baluchistan) distance from one school to another is around 74 km which is a major issue. There is no transport for officers and politics has increased - vehicles for DDO and ADO for visits.”</p> <p>“No transport for staff.”</p> <p>“Schools lie far and wide for which no conveyance is there. Teachers and officers find great difficulty in getting to these schools.”</p> <p>“Lack of basic facilities in schools such as furniture (most referred), drinking water and toilet”</p> <p>“We don’t have modern facilities in our schools due to which the process of education is not being executed well and for which we must strive.”</p>
Procedurals	<p>“Don’t find funds on time”</p> <p>“Visit are crucial to improve standards of education (for which there is little budget)”</p> <p>“There is the same old method being followed in our offices; we hand-write letters, or use typewriter. Use of computer, Internet, and DSL is very important in offices. These facilities should be provided to staff and they must know how to use them.”</p>
Lack of teacher commitment and/ or competence	<p>“Teachers are not sincere with their jobs/ Lack of teacher interest.”</p> <p>“Unprofessional attitude of teachers.”</p> <p>“There are often difficulties too; teachers are reluctant to go to distant areas; and use links to work to schools nearby their homes. At other instance, teachers are pressed politically not to teach. Sometimes political intervention created huge difficulties in teachers’ induction.”</p>
Unjust/ Unfair Treatment	<p>“Undue recommendations for scholarship deprive talented students of it.”</p> <p>“Undue recommendation culture.”</p> <p>“The biggest issue is the challenge of unfair means in exams.”</p> <p>“Schools are being affected due to unnecessary transfers.”</p>
Parents/ Community	<p>“Parents lack of sense of education.”</p> <p>“Lack of interest of parents.”</p>

Challenge/ Category	Variations/ Versions/ Other Articulations
Indifference	<p>“Ineffective role of community.”</p> <p>“The present social system.”</p>
Human Resources	<p>“Inefficient and careless staff.”</p> <p>“Regular training should be provided.”</p> <p>“Training of teachers may not be good/ Lack (or limited) of teachers training as per demands of today’s times.”</p>
Learning Materials	<p>“Textbooks are not provided.”</p> <p>“No timely distribution of books (due to Sind Textbook Board).”</p> <p>“Delay in printing of books and insufficient number of books.”</p> <p>“Lack of teaching material and monitoring, transport.”</p>

Most of the district education officers appreciate their social status, opportunities to network with others and ‘sense of power’. They have specifically indicated ‘monitoring’, ‘checking’, ‘supervision’ and their ‘role as a problem solver’ as the most desired aspects of their role as an educational manager. These desirable aspects may have a direct or indirect link to that of power and status. The data indicates that power and status are the most cherished aspirations and/or expectations in relation to the object. At times, some educational managers also show some concern for educational improvement. In reciprocal terms, power of other stakeholders, lack of resources, teachers’ absenteeism are the most significant constraints in their construction of the object.

5.3 Analysis of Organisational Discourse

The current section (5.3) presents an analysis of the dominant discourse at the organisational level in order to get deeper insights into what the discourse reveals about the management activity system, revealing also how the very object of the activity system is perceived by its key stakeholders. An analysis of the discourse also reflects the dominant perceptions held by the key stakeholders about their and others’ roles vis-à-vis the activity system – it, thus, also describes the social context of the activity system (i.e. the management practice in this case), the nature of relationships and interactions.

The data on discourse have been generated through asking the district education managers (DEO/ ADOs) to list down the most Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) or Frequently Used Statements (FUS) that they get to hear/ receive from e.g. the politicians, higher authorities (their senior officials), school heads, parents or community for getting important insights regarding the expectations of these stakeholders (reflective of their desires and/ or existing practice). Likewise, the head teachers and teacher trainers (as key stakeholders at school level) were also asked to list the FAQs and FUS that they receive from the district education managers in order to understand the discourse directed from district education managers to them. The tool allowed access to prevailing discourse and the locus of attention within the activity system (see Chapter Two for further details regarding the rationale, significance and tool used for discourse analysis).

The structure of the current section (5.3) is as follows: Sub-sections 5.3.1 – 5.3.4 present the discourse directed at the DEO by the politicians, higher authorities, school heads and community as reported by district education officers. Sub-section 5.3.5 presents the discourse of district education officers as reported by head teachers and teacher educators, followed by a conclusion for this section (5.3).

5.3.1 Analysis of Politicians’ Discourse

Box 5.1 presents the FAQs/ FUS directed at the district education managers by the Politicians.

Box 5.1: FAQs from District Educational Managers by Politicians

“Transfer/ posting of X”

“transfer & posting of staff as per their recommendations”

“doing illegal work, recruitments”

“teacher’s transfers”

“when new jobs will be offered”

“appoint my son or relative”

“recruitment of teachers”

“why salaries of a, b , c staff is stopped, because they are ‘their’ people”

“pay salary to staff member A”

“why teacher’s salary is stopped”

“transfer & salaries of teachers”
“issue salary even to absent teachers”
“unlawful pressure (transfer threats)”
“obey our orders, otherwise you will lose your seat (position)”
“what is your salary and what is your work”
“recommendations for absent teachers”
“giving concessions to those staff members who remain absent from school”
“resolve the issue of person A”
“do not take duty form person A”
“providing school building for private ceremonies to their person”
“giving concessions to their special people”
“basic necessities at schools”
“shortage of resources”
“list of needed rooms, electricity, water & library at school”
“list of those schools which are recommended for up gradation”
“free books have been distributed to all students or not”
“status of district’s schools”
“opening of new school”
“complains by civil society”

The politicians’ FAQs, as reported by the district education managers/ officers, seem quite consistent across the other data sets also. Consistently, they mention the aspects listed below as FAQs, which are not only indicative of the nature of politicians’ interest in the education process but also provides insights as to what is meant by the ‘political intervention’ frequently mentioned by various educational managers or stakeholders in the educational process.

Transfer/ Posting of Teachers or Staff

Politicians influence the processes of teachers’ or staff’s transfer or postings – this is one of the most frequently made interventions on the part of the politicians, where they frequently require the district education officers to carry out the transfer/ postings as per their recommendations – this is where favoritism or nepotism is exercised.

Influencing New Appointments

The data analysis depicts that the politicians also frequently influence the process of appointments – requiring appointment of their relatives or political workers’ (their vote bank or personal favorites’). “Appoint my son or relative” - is a frequently uttered statement/ order or coercion on part of the politicians, as reported by the district education managers.

Concerning Salary Issue of Teachers/ Staff

Another area of very frequent intervention or influence, as reported by the managers, is regarding the salaries of teachers or staff, where they require that the salaries of the teachers/ staff should not be discontinued/ stopped even when the teachers/ staff remain absent or never go to schools (working as ghost teachers) but continue to draw salaries. In this way, they also interfere with the government processes (of penalizing teacher absenteeism).

In Support of Other Corrupt Practices

The politicians intervene in the selection process for school building or use the school building for personal reasons (e.g. as stable for their animals). For politicians, teachers are their potential vote bank or election workers. The teaching jobs, therefore, are distributed as personal favors so that these teachers can continue working for the politicians, instead of the cause of education. This is the very reason why the analysis of politicians’ discourse highlights that politicians’ frequent queries directed at the DEOs are in support of the corrupt practices of these teachers/ staff. And the most common tool used by the politicians to exercise their power is the threat of transfer to another place or of taking away their authority as DOE (officially termed as OSD i.e. ‘Officer on Special Duty’).

Likewise, the politicians’ concerns for opening of new schools are also often rooted in corrupt practices (as highlighted by other data sets), as new schools would imply new fund allocations, which can then be utilized for purposes other than educational. Additionally though, since closed schools also means that the community (i.e. their vote bank) would lose trust in the politicians to provide for education in the vicinity. Therefore, the politicians concerns regarding closed schools can also be interpreted in the context of their broader political interest with reference to the community/ locality.

There is some data that indicate some queries with reference to the shortage/ provision of resources at schools, up gradation of schools, condition/ status of district’s schools, opening of new school, etc. – however, such data are smaller in size; the most

frequent queries and concerns remain the ones discussed above. Thus, the most important insight that the discourse analysis has provided is that the FAQs are not about teaching and learning or about students and learning outcomes.

5.3.2 Analysis of Higher Authorities' Discourse

Box 5.2 presents the FAQs/ FUS directed at the district education managers by the Higher Authorities.

Box 5.2: FAQs from District Educational Managers by Higher Authorities

“Information about school, teachers etc.”
“missing facilities’ list”
“list of science, social studies and English teachers of (project) schools”
“enrolment of students in district”
“number of staff in district”
“vacancy statement”
“urgent information”
“whether all the schools are functional or not”
“nomination of best teachers”
“non-availability of required information”
“school census”
“examinations results”
“budget allocation, budget statement; expenditure report”
“progress report”

“Resolving problems at schools”
“resolving issues and their report”
“administrative problems”
“Attending seminars, workshops meetings on their behalf”
“attending meetings”
“going to court on their behalf”
“signing on different papers on their behalf”

“School visits; visit report”
“regularity and punctuality of teachers”

“monthly school report”
“status of school”
“progress of office related work”
“transfer of staff”
“appointment of the person, who has provided land for school building ,as support staff”
“visit specific village from where complaints have been received”
“getting work done by teacher”
“free books”
“paper setting”
“copy culture”

The frequently asked queries by the higher authorities can be categorized in terms of the following key categories:

Information Seeking – Regular and Urgent/ Ad hoc

Information seeking is a regular requirement by the higher authorities, sometimes as part of the routine work following normal procedure but, most frequently, as an urgent and ad hoc requirement/ demand Generally, the information sought is about missing facilities, list of project trained teachers, student enrolment at the district level, number of staff in the district, functional/ dysfunctional schools, nominations (for training, awards, etc.), school census data, examinations results, budget statements, report (progress/ visit/ expense), etc. The frequently asked queries related to school were about transfer, posting, training, performance, complaints, resource allocation, etc.

The higher authorities are responsible to their higher ups for provision of information and addressing other concerns/ problems. However, one consistent observation is that the information sought is often on urgent or ad hoc basis, and more often than not the exercise is quite redundant and/ or meaningless. Despite the fact that the planning needs to be based on accurate, comprehensive and timely availability and accessibility of information, there is no efficient system in place at the district level that can be efficiently and effectively used for this purpose.

Though Sindh Education Management Information System (SEMIS) is in place, it has many gaps (which get a recurrent mention at various public education forums). First, it is not comprehensive enough. Second, often, the data collected is incomplete and inaccurate due to the manner in which the tool (SEMIS Form) is used and implemented for data collection.

Third, there are no means nor efforts to cross validate the information collected – it is not even effectively and generally used at the grassroots level to ensure accuracy of information.

The inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the existing data management system is evident from the fact that despite the system being in place, the senior officials and other management staff keep asking for the information (instead of accessing it directly through available system) and that also on urgent basis – and the information sought is also quite repetitive in nature. When the higher authorities require their lower staff to provide them with information, their staff members pass this message down to their lower staff who, because of the urgent and repetitive nature of information required, may end up providing information that is inaccurate, but the officers, generally, have no means or time to find out. And the decisions are based on such information provisions.

Information generation, storage, retrieval, management and sharing are very important processes or functions in relation to Organisational Learning. However, if we look at the scenario at DOEs, it is quite evident how the system is flawed. Again, it is quite insightful to note that the FAQs are, by and large, not about teaching and learning, pedagogy or student learning outcomes.

Representation on Relevant Forums

The district education managers are frequently required to attend meetings on behalf of their higher ups, and to represent them on relevant forums e.g. seminars, workshops, meetings, court sessions, or signing different papers on behalf of their higher authorities.

Follow Up

Other set of frequent statements are regarding follow up on identified problems, requiring them to address the issues and report back.

5.3.3 Analysis of School Heads' Discourse

Box 5.3 presents the FAQs/ FUS directed at the district education managers by the School Heads.

Box 5.3: FAQs from District Educational Managers by the School Heads

“Why many visits are paid to school?”

“Budget”

“lack of funds/ provision of SMC funds”

“funds for head teachers”

“shortage of furniture”

“shortage of teachers”

“other requirements of school”

“non-availability of other facilities”

“repair of building”

“conveyance issue”

“Shortage of books and furniture”

“basic facilities at school”

“Absenteeism of teachers”

“teachers’ leave issues”

“regularity and punctuality of teachers”

“TA/DA (i.e. Travel and Daily Allowance) of teachers and head-teachers”

“GP fund”

“salary increase/ late receipt of salary”

“time scale”

“provide teachers especially local teachers”

“teachers’ appointment at their schools”

“shortage of staff”

“not to transfer teachers frequently”

“transfer to their favorite school”

“teacher demands for promotion as head teacher”

“teacher’s service book”

“B.Ed. increment”

“annual increments”

“recommendations about school”

“their pay scales”

“dealing with those teachers who are from GASTA and do not cooperate with head teacher”

“signing of GP bill”

“follow-up of their complaints”

“Holidays”

“Training & refresher courses”
“Reading and writing material”
“absent students and their copies work”

The frequently asked questions by the head teachers can also be categorized in terms of the following issues, concerns or interests:

Resource Provision/ Shortages

School heads often ask DOEs for provision of resources, especially, physical resources such as furniture, books, etc. It is also about funds and release of funds, which often remains their primary concern.

Concerns regarding the Frequency of School Visits

As reported by the district managers, one frequent concern raised by the head teacher is regarding the school visits, and especially about their frequency (e.g. reflected through the comment: ‘why so many visits taking place’), implying that either the school visits are very frequent or that the school heads do not want to be visited so frequently. On a different account, however, the statement is problematic, as it seems to imply that the DEOs conduct very frequent school visits. On the contrary, the majority of the data set seems to indicate that the school inspection (carried out through school visits) has reduced to a great extent – in effect, it is not happening any more at many places.

Teacher Regularity and Punctuality

FAQs also relate to the commonly expressed concerns regarding/ around teacher irregularity and lack of punctuality – these come across as major challenges in the context of corruption and political interference.

HR Related/ Issues

Then, the concerns/ queries also frequently relate to job specific issues, head teacher’s or teachers’ – e.g. questions regarding salary, transfer, posting, promotion, appointment, etc.

Follow Up – Complaints/ Trainings

Some other set of issues relate to follow up on the complaints lodged earlier by the head teacher or about the trainings (which became quite frequent after the donor-funded projects started in the province since 80's).

Once again, it is critical to note that FAQs are, by and large, not about teaching and learning, or students learning outcomes – even at the level of the school head. There was only one mention of student related concerns in the FAQs – i.e. student absenteeism.

5.3.4 Analysis of Community's Discourse

Box 5.4 presents the FAQs/ FUS directed at the district education managers by the Community.

Box 5.4: FAQs from District Educational Managers by the Community

“security concerns for schools due to critical situation of law and order”
“teaching methodology”
“co-curricular activities for students”
“admission of students”
“why students are punished”
“educational status of school”
“sub-standard of education”
“school visit”
“academic performance of their children”
“result cards of students should be prepared, so that their academic performance could be looked at”

“teachers absenteeism / regularity or punctuality issue”
“teachers’ lack of attention on students”
“their job description”
“appointment of local teachers in schools”
“teacher’s behavior”

“school’s up gradation”
“opening a new school in their village”
“Primary school is still closed due to flood, so why new building is not built?”
“school holidays”

“condition of schools”
“health and hygiene at schools”
“shortage of books/ provision of free text books”
“non-availability of water”
“shortage of furniture at school”
“basic facilities/ necessities at school (e.g. availability of electricity, water and toilets), with the cooperation of parents and community”
“repairing the school building”
“monthly stipend of their children/ girls stipends”

“Formation of parents-teachers committee”
“cooperation of parents and teachers”
“monthly meetings of parents and teachers”
“if there is any vacancy then appoint me and pay the salary from SMC fund”
“re school work not done despite the availability of SMC fund (which they think has been misused by the head teacher)”

The frequently expressed concerns (reflected through their FAQs) can be seen in terms of the following categories:

Learning Environment/ Outcomes

FAQs reflect concerns regarding schooling outcomes, punishment, quality of education, student outcomes.

Teachers Performance

FAQs also reflect community’s concerns about teacher regularity and punctuality and their demand/ desire to select teachers from within the locality/ community (based on their assumption that local teachers would have more stakes in the education of their community’s children).

Provision of Schools

This category of FAQs relate to concerns where schools are either not available, are closed or they need up-gradation.

Physical Environment/ Facilities

Generally speaking, this is one aspect that gets readily noticed by all the stakeholders. It is, in a way, easier to deal with or show performance in. Moreover, this is also one area where funds can be requested/ channelized – hence, creating more opportunities for corruption.

School Funds (SMC)

As discussed above, school funds are generally a much sought-after concern or subject for FAQs/ FUS – given the overall context of corruption. It is evident that parents and community mistrust head teachers with the school funds.

5.3.5 Analysis of District Education Managers’ Discourse

What the district education managers are asked by the different key stakeholders has already been discussed. This section presents an analysis of the district education managers’ discourse – i.e. the discourse (as reported/ shared by the head teachers and teacher trainers at the data generation workshops) that these managers use with the head teachers and teacher trainers during interactions with them (summary of their FAQs/ FUS is provided in Appendix D for detailed reference). The discourse analysis provides very useful insights in relation to the key attentions of the district education managers (see Box 5.5), reflective of the conception of ‘object’ of school management by the key stakeholders.

Box 5.5: FAQs of District Educational Managers from the Head teachers

“We’ve done so much for our district; now we want our share in whatever goes out here.”

“Didn’t have time for Inspection; quickly send transport and food.”

“Given us money for petrol”

“Ghost teachers will not be spared.”

“Level of unfair means in schools must be diminished.”

“To check and balance”

“Bane on transfer”

“Don’t do this; don’t do that.”

“I didn’t listen/ No discuss”

“I will come and check your course “and HT.

“Obey and improve”
“I am busy in meeting”
“Take what u have given”
“Inform immediately”
“We know you work but at some places we’re helpless”

“They stress on quality teaching Improve the standards of your school.”
“It is imperative to bring quality education in schools.”
“Improve school’s progress.”

“Teachers must realize their responsibilities”
“They want us to ensure teachers regularity.”
“Ensuring staff presence”
“They ask us to follow the timetable, schedule, etc. They tell us to come on time.”
“While visiting us, they point out issues and help us solve them.”
“They want to check all the record during inspection”
“They want information on time/ Completion of course”
“Management of school”
“They want us to pay attention to cleanliness”
“Stress on teaching/ Inquire about teaching”
“They spend more time during visit”
“They check bills for schools.”
“They tell students for uniform”
“Provide complete information on time”
“To present SMC to DOE”
“To meet DOE to discuss the transfer of good teachers.”
“Children should not fail.”
“Let the children use computers.”
“Plant trees.”
“Do go for training programs and the like.”
“Be polite to the staff members.”
“New teachers will be appointed”
“Middle exam program”
“Gaming competitions”
“Social and other programs”
“To maintain office needs”

“Such-and-such school is better than this one.”
“I recommended such-and-such teacher to the Minister.”
“Your teachers are very regular.”
“They recommend some teachers”
“School is working smoothly”
“Your problems are written in my dairy”

“You don’t provide information on time.”
“Why is there no teacher?”
“Be in time for the meeting.”
“Why did you not maintain the record?”

The following emerged as main categories of the discourse analysis – reported by the school heads (detailed examples of FAQs/ FUS are available in Appendix D).

Corruption and Corrupt Practices

A major category of the discourse reflects the overall culture of corruption and malpractices, where the focus is more on rights (misplaced) than on responsibilities (even the perceived ones do not get fulfilled in most cases) – most of them ignore their main responsibilities but remain focused on getting money.

Corruption and Corrupt Practices – A Criticism

Contrary to the above, another important category that emerged was against corruption or corrupt practices – the statements reflect a criticism of the prevailing corrupt culture and practices at the district education level and education in general. The statements under this category highlight the key challenges in the system often faced by the honest, committed individuals – these include, for instance:

- The issue of ‘ghost’ teachers or ‘teachers-on-visa system’ (teachers who are not there, but their salary is being consumed)
- The challenges faced due to the use of unfair means by others to support wrong actions or to get undue favors
- Frequent transfers – referring to the transfer of committed, senior officials before they are able to bring any positive change and which comes as a loss to system; and very often these transfers are made as a penalty to the sincere/ committed teachers for their

right actions or to replace them by influential person's favorites so that their corrupt practices can continue to be unchallenged

- Emphasis on check-and-balance as opposed to the culture of corruption.

Authority/ Power Discourse

The frequently uttered statements are quite insightful and very reflective of the overall culture of power and authority prevalent in the public sector in general, and education sector and district education management system in particular. In effect, much of it reflects the broader national culture also. For instance, the broader national culture is a culture that strongly requires 'obedience' by the superiors. Then, the element of 'urgency' that is evident in the discourse is reflective of the exercise of authority – all the information is urgently required by the officers/ managers e.g. orders such as, 'inform immediately!' Moreover, as already discussed, transfer is also used as an exercise of authority – to penalize the honest and committed (or someone who would not comply with carrying out the corrupt practices). 'Sudden visits' are also used as an exercise of power and authority. Likewise, 'I will come and check your course and head teacher' reflects similar exercise of power or authority. The whole discourse is reflective of power-authority and power-distance relationships, which is also indicative of their conceptualization of the 'object'. There was only one instance where the statement, 'we are helpless' is used, but that also is a discourse related to power or powerlessness.

Their Role – Conception of Object (Official)

Further to the comments and analysis above, it is quite evident that their conception of object, as reported by the head teachers, remains quite narrow: Although their role or task is to manage education, 'education' or 'educational outcomes' remain missing from their discourse and, thereby, from their management practice also. The focus, by and large, remains on other issues, which are surface level or probably easier to manage and show progress against e.g. issues concerning teacher regularity, follow up of timetable, problem-solving, record checking, information needs, checking school bills or student uniform, etc. Statements relating to teaching learning, pedagogy, student outcomes, student participation, engagement or classrooms are rare; it seems that the attention is generally 'around' learning, not about learning (barring a few rare comments). Box 5.6 below provides some examples of the general/ dominant discourse of the educational managers (as portrayed by the teachers/ teacher trainers) to indicate what remains the dominant focus of the managers' discourse; it

highlights, especially, their limited focus on the actual object of the activity system – improving/ enhancing the educational/ learning outcomes.

Box 5.6: FAQs of District Educational Managers from the Teachers/ Teacher Trainers

“They’re [the educational managers] not sincere in the growth of education”

“They [the educational managers] do not visit schools”

“They do not coordinate about education but they disturb the school. The teachers who are sincere, they transfer them”

“What did you bring for us?”

“How much did you earn?”

“YOU just remain on training”

“Take care of us too”

“These trainings will do nothing”

“Authoritative”

“You take double salary”

“Where is influential person of your village?”

“Some teachers do not go to school and have support of politicians”

“I select you for TDP”

“DO as I want”

“Complete your course in time”

“I will take surprise visit to your school”

“I will transfer you”

“How is your school running?”

“I will take action against you”

“Order to apply these methods and techniques in the school”

“Schedule your further planning and development for education”

“Improve quality of education”

“Work as trainers but also in schools”

“Are you using training material in your school?”

“You also encourage other teachers to teach?”

“Conveys messages from higher authorities”

“Responsible for district level education”

“Try your best to teach with new skills”
“We’re ready to give you full support”
“Please tell me what is the performance of our teachers after learning”
“You must do work hard”
“They support us and encourage us in any program”

“Supports in official matters”
“Preferences in training”
“Respect efficient teachers”
“Sometimes appreciate the environment of class”
“Appreciate the ability of work”
“Students take interest”
“You have a loud voice”
“Given letter of appreciation/ You are doing well/Appreciate us”

“You always remain on training”
“You’re very stubborn”
“Why do you always teach in girls’ school?”
“Are you the only person in district that your name appears in every list?”
“Your students are dull in maths”
“Work is not satisfactory”
“Cleanliness is not present”
“Attendance is very short”

The main categories of district managers’ discourse that emerged through an analysis of the FAQs/ FUS reported by the teacher trainers are discussed in the next sections (detailed examples of FAQs/ FUS are available in Appendix D).

Corrupt Practices

One of the major categories emerging from the analysis of district managers’ discourse (as reported by the teacher trainers) is about the prevailing culture of corrupt practices at the district management level. For instance, it is indicated that the DOE is not generally concerned about education (and educational outcomes), but rather their presence creates more hindrance and barriers for those who are working for the betterment of education and students. One example quoted is that of ‘transfer’ of honest or committed teachers. Other

examples include, for instance, ‘sudden’/ ‘surprise visits’ for the purpose of checking, in place of facilitating or supporting the cause of education. Likewise, it is evident that they are well aware of the lucrative nature of project related trainings (where they receive TA/DA – the allowances which are in addition to their salary), and it seems that the DEOs are unhappy where the head teachers get more opportunities for training (thereby getting more allowances). In such context, therefore, favoritism and nepotism are in practice so that they can send their relatives or favorites for training. ‘Take care of us too’ – this is an expression truly indicative of their corrupt interests e.g. in getting a share in what they get as a training allowance.

Authority/ Power Discourse

The statements made by the teacher trainers regarding the district managers’ discourse capture the overall culture and discourse of power and authority. For instance, some teacher trainers used the term ‘authoritative’ to refer to the district education managers. The statement regarding teacher absenteeism because of politicians’ support again refers to the overall discourse of power and corruption. Moreover, their statement, ‘Do as I want’, ‘Order to apply’ – are typical examples of authority portrayed through their discourse. Furthermore, ‘surprise visits’, ‘transfer’, ‘will take action against you’ – all are rooted in the prevailing power discourse and authority culture. This discourse depicts that the inspection visits are not about school improvement or students’ outcomes, but about the exercise of power and authority and that also for unfair reasons – which is indicative of a very narrow conception of the object of the activity system.

Quality of Education

The analysis indicates that there are *some* district education managers whose discourse reflects some focus and emphasis on quality education – however, it is not evident as yet whether the focus is at the level of rhetoric or there is a genuine interest and concern, and that this is part of their management practice. A common observation (based on my years of experience) is that sometimes, the respondents (as being part of the overall culture of corruption) may just make such statements but these may not reflect the reality on ground.

Their Role/ Object (Official)

A synthesis of the analysis of district managers’ discourse suggests that the focus dominantly remains on issues such as frequency of training, teacher attendance (regularity), punctuality

or cleanliness – this is quite consistent with the findings of the analysis of discourse reported by the head teachers above. Another dimension of their role, consistent with the data quoted elsewhere, is just conveying messages from higher authorities (see the use of the DEOs as ‘Post Offices’ metaphor in Chapter Four). The discourse analysis of feedback (appreciative or depreciative) provided by the district education managers (as reported by the teacher trainers) indicates that the focus and locus of attention is quite narrow (as reflected through the above examples of the matters of their concern or the issues that they attend to). Only one comment was made about student progress or lack of it: ‘your students are dull in Maths’.

There are, however, some statements that may be seen as indicative of broader conception of object as compared to the FAQs quoted by the head teachers e.g. encourage students, apply learning from training, help other teachers, motivate science teachers, use new teaching skill, cooperate with parents, give benefit to students, etc. However, these statements come from 2-3 respondents – not all – so these may be reflective of the situation in only a few districts where they work.

5.3.6 Conclusion

The current section (5.3) has discussed the enacted positions of five distinct stakeholders in relation to the object of the activity system. These are: Politicians/ power players; departmental authorities; head teachers; community, and district education officers. The data for the first four categories were generated based on district education officers’ reports, whereas, the enacted position of the district education officers were traced through the data provided by head teachers and teacher educators.

The data indicate stark differences among the comments of the different stakeholders, with little overlaps. The most powerful group comprises of politicians, local landlords, and clerk and teacher unions, which are primarily concerned with the exercise of power for political mileage or patronage through new appointments, posting/ transfer of teachers and other activities leading to such gains. This disconnect between the enacted positions explain fragmentation, ad-hocism and lack of coordination in the system. The departmental authorities mainly require data and information from the lower offices. This echoes the most common metaphor of DEOs as Post Offices. As reported by DEOs, head teachers, by and large, send requests for resources and for the resolution of other administrative issues. Similarly, the data from head teachers and teacher educators report lack of educational focus on the part of DEOs. This means that each official layer of educational management, by and

large, reflects other layers in terms of their apathy and indifference towards educational aspects of school management. The only group concerned with educational outcomes was the community; though the overall situation, as the data indicate, has resulted in the disengagement of the community and also that of the teachers (who are referred to as lacking in commitments and competence by other stakeholders).

5.4 Narrative Analysis of Management Practice/ Analysis of Situated or Organizational Experiences

The present section (5.4) presents an analysis of rich data generated through collective sharing and reflections on organizational experiences of the educational managers (both, field based and school based). This data have been elicited during the interactive data generation workshops through storytelling using pictures. Collective reflections on the presented stories helped to draw valid interpretations of the data/ stories. The details on method and tool have already been discussed in Chapter Two.

Narratives, as discussed earlier, being important tools for humans to interpret and make sense of their own and other peoples' actions and intentions, provide access to the social, cultural and historical meanings that the research participants assign to events in their lives. Therefore, this tool has been used to get insights into the day-to-day actions and dynamics of relations as experienced and perceived by them. Moreover, the characters and their positioning in the stories were useful in uncovering the power relationships at the workplace.

In the following paragraphs, the section will present some general comments about the stories shared by district based educational officers. Then, a gist of stories shared by DEOs will be presented to get a sense of the stories shared by DEOs, followed by their analysis. Next, an analysis of the stories shared by Headteachers will be shared for drawing conclusions.

The stories are a combination of facts (what happens at work place) as well as fictions (what can possibly happen in this context). Most of the participants depict the EDOs (the higher authority) as autocratic, harsh, critical and volatile. However, during the post-activity reflections, some of the participants argue and refute this stereotype and recount that only some EDOs are like that, not all – not all EDOs are reactive nor are the explanations that they seek are always uncalled for – they have been reasonable many of the times.

The narratives provide very useful insights in relation to the power relations; the influential people within and outside the educational system; the sense of power or powerlessness; the key foci of the activity system; what works in the system; the challenges and difficulties faced by them on day-to-day basis; their perceptions about their own role in school improvement and their position; contradiction in the system and the way they get resolved; etc. The stories highlight the deep-rooted issues of political interference/ patronage, malpractices, and lack of commitment on part of the educational managers and teachers in relation to the realization of educational goals. Since the respondents/ participants have been asked to necessarily end their stories on a positive note, it allows insights into how the contradictions in the systems can possibly get resolved, as perceived by the people around which these narratives revolve. These different aspects of the narratives are elaborated in the following lines.

The gist of some of the stories (along with their emerging themes) shared by the DEOs is provided in Box 5.7, as some representative examples (see the summary of the stories shared by the field educational managers in Appendix B for detailed reference). The summary of narratives is followed by an analysis of the narratives of the educational managers.

Box 5.7: Picture Stories (by DEOs) – Summary and Analysis

Stories Gist:

Two of the stories are about corporal punishment and how the parents complain to the DEO and supervisor against a teacher who uses corporal punishment against a child. The EDEO finally resolves the issue.

The other story is about a principal visiting a class and finding out that the teacher is absent from the class; he takes action against the teacher though, as a result, he has to face consequences from his higher ups. The student unions also start protesting against him. He gets fired. A meeting among the DEOs, teachers' association and students' union takes place and the issue is resolved.

In another story of similar type, a DEO deals with an inefficient teacher, who is actually the relative of a politician. The DEO got the teacher transferred to another school and brought another efficient teacher in his place through using political interference to his mileage. In the end, the teacher apologizes and both are reinstated.

Another story is about how a DEO, commissioner and deputy commissioner solved the issue of provision of resources (fans) to a school.

Two stories are about how the district office managers overcome the problems that the flood brought on to a school.

One story revolved around the resistance around female education, which was resolved through the ED-Links (project) workshops.

Another story is about a corrupt contractor (who is politician's relative also) securing the tender of building a school and how he embezzled fund and constructed a building that fell down. The principal was still being forced to let him continue building the school. She approached the EDO, who solved this problem and got the contractor arrested.

One story is about a mobile IT lab provided to a school by the ED-Links Project, and how the principal shut it down due to lack of IT trained teachers. The EDOE got perturbed and asked the lab to be opened and the existing teachers to be trained.

In another story, a school building is constructed at a place remote from the local populace, because of which it ends being used by animals, and finally it also falls down, causing injury to two children. The DEO and project directors finally decide to build the school at an appropriate place.

In another story, a similar action is taken by the EDO, DCO, local *nazim*, community and EDO education works and service. But the local landlord firstly tries to confiscate the school for his stable, then, the teachers go on a strike. These issues were resolved with the help of the DEO and the local *imam*.

In another story, an international NGO decided to build a school for girls in an impoverished community. The school was to impart education plus vocational training, breakfast, computing skills, etc. The local landlord protested against this. The media, the populace, the NGOs, CBOs – all joined hands and protested against this and finally the school was built.

One of the stories is about how funds are allocated for a school's resources by an NGO.

Another story defines how a short term project with an NGO led to a situation where a feeder school was opened for a short period but could not be sustained as the teachers' salaries were reallocated to the flood relief funds. The DEOs decided to collaborate with NGOs for long term projects only.

The summary in Box 5.7 provides some insights in relation to the nature of the stories constructed and shared by the district education officers as well as the school heads. The current section (5.4) presents an analysis of the narratives shared. Table 5.4 below provides a quick overview of the themes that emerged from the stories of district education officers and school heads, which are subsequently discussed in Sub-sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 respectively.

Table 5.4: Thematic Overview of Sub-sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2

Analysis of the Narratives	
District Education Officers (Cf. 5.4.1)	School Heads (Cf. 5.4.2)
Discourse of Power/ Authority	Power
Corruption/ Nepotism	Corruption/ Nepotism
Construction of Object – Educational Management as Provision of Physical Resources	Discrepancies in Official Claims and Practices
Resolution of Contradictions/ Conflicts	Resolution of Contradictions/ Collective Development in the System (Improving Schools)
Resolution through Power or Authority's Intervention	Construction of Object

5.4.1 Analysis of the Narratives by the Educational Officers

Discourse of Power/ Authority

One dominant aspect of the discourse of these narratives is that of Power and Authority. For instance, in these narratives, the role of the local politician as authority figure is highlighted. In another story, the authority of local politician is emphasized vis-à-vis the powerlessness of the DEO. One very revealing story is where the powerlessness of school leadership is highlighted against the powerfulness of the teacher – which, in that case, came from the power of the union – teachers and students. It is not ‘positional’ authority, as the head teacher should be more authoritative than the teacher at the school. This, certainly, is a story rooted in the discourse of power – the headteacher is so powerless that he cannot penalize wrongdoing on part of the teacher because the teacher is supported by the teacher unions (which, as reported, are also powerful networks of influence and corruption). It is also a story of prevailing culture of nepotism, which will be discussed in the next lines.

In addition to the local politician, the landlord also features in as another power figure in the story of educational management in general and district education management in particular. The stories thus narrated are not only typical stories of corruption and negative exercise of authority on part of the landlords (*'wadairas'*, *'zamindars'*, *'jagirdars'*²), but the story is also reflective of the general and prevailing lack of concern for education on part of the local politicians and landlords. One of the stories that features the landlord is a case where the landlord does not want the children (and, especially, the girls) to get educated so that they can continue to rule over an uneducated lot who cannot question their unfair treatment and injustice. In these narratives, interestingly, the local *'imam'* (a religious figure) also comes across as an influential figure – a religious authority or a respected figure. Concerned/ aware parents and community have also been portrayed as influential i.e. if they exercise their influence – their influence could come from being the main stakeholders whose children are being affected/ influenced by all these decisions/ corruption.

Corruption/ Nepotism

Again, most of the narrated stories are stories of prevailing corruption and nepotism. Corruption is seen, for instance, in that the school building gets used as an animal stable by the influential landlord or the way wrong decisions are taken for building schools (constructed in far flung areas instead of in close access to the school going populations) to serve their vested interests. Teacher absence from the schools and getting supported by the influential people (e.g. local politician) is also a case of corruption and nepotism. In this context, the non-deserving candidates (dishonest, corrupt) are favored over the deserving ones (e.g. honest, committed, sincere teacher or head teacher) because of being the relative of a powerful/ influential/ authority figure or the voter/ worker of the local politician. The narrations portray the prevailing culture very strongly.

Construction of Object – Educational Management as Provision of Physical Resources

The stories, reflective of the ground realities, depict that the focus of school improvement/ transformation mostly remains on physical aspects of resource provision. This is reflected in many of the stories, and particularly, one story is quite insightful where provision of even basic facilities to the school becomes such a high profile activity that it requires mobilization

² The local language expressions used invariably to describe the landlords/ landowners – these are often used to communicate the feeling of extreme dislike and hatred for such power figures. These have almost been used interchangeably as symbols of corruption and injustice.

of the bureaucratic network (at senior level). This is quite a narrow conceptualization of the object though.

Resolution of Contradictions/ Conflicts Resolution through Power or Authority's Intervention

Different stories depict different actors and means through which the issues could be addressed or the contradictions could get resolved. In some of the stories, hope is embodied in media, local community, NGOs or aware/ concerned parents. The nature of ad hoc decision making prevailing at the district level also gets highlighted through these stories. Hope is also depicted in form of positive personal interest of the senior educational leadership (at the district level), and the positive consequence of such interest. The underlined message is that if the EDOs take positive interest, the situation can be positively transformed. In another story, the message of hope is if the senior educational leadership (EDO in this case) asserts his positional authority (which in a way refers to the personal authority – i.e. authority that comes through being morally strong). This implies that hope is found if the relevant educational leaders take appropriate decisions and actions, and perform their due role. NGO's positive role (in terms of resource provision) gets highlighted in the stories.

5.4.2 Analysis of the Narratives by the School Heads

Power

In the stories depicted by the school heads also, what is consistent is the discourse of power and powerlessness. Power discourse is an important discourse to understand the education/ school management in Sindh. In these narratives also, the local influential people feature as important stakeholders. Local politician's role as influential and corrupt person also gets highlighted. The relationship between DEOs and schools is also very strongly depicted, where 'Surprise Visits' (which were originally supposed to be inspection visits) and 'Explanation Call' are portrayed as powerful tools to exercise authority (or as expression of authority). This is, for instance, gets reflected in one of the stories where what teachers inform the EDO does not suffice – they are called for an explanation, and the headteacher and teachers are summoned to the office.

In these stories, the community support and their influential role also get highlighted. The narratives not only depict the nature of relationship between district education offices and schools, but also depict the significance of relationship with the community.

Corruption/ Nepotism

The stories by the school heads also highlight examples of corruption and culture of nepotism. It is also quite insightful to see how one DEO paid a surprise visit to the school just because he has heard complaints against the school/ school head. Complaint or back-biting is quite a common feature of a culture, where favoritism and nepotism prevail – often, the higher ups do give an ear to such complaints, which may be because it gives them an opportunity to penalize and/ or exercise their authority. It is important to note that the respondents were forced to write a happy ending (reflected in their narrations), otherwise, the main story portrays the usual situation of many schools in Sindh where, for instance, the intervention of the EDO is hardly for the purpose of betterment of schools. EDO portrayed in one of the stories gets convinced of the HT's efforts to transform school situation; in real situation, often, the HT does not get much opportunity to resist EDO, nor does the EDO get convinced because the school was transformed

Discrepancies in Official Claims and Practices

Stories shared by the Headteachers also indicate their concerns regarding disconnect between the official statements about importance of education and actual implementation of the policies (discussed earlier in Chapter 4). For example, one of the stories further endorses that education is the least of the government's priorities; it is reflected in the fact that school buildings are the first that get confiscated for the purpose of accommodating flood victims – other offices do not get so severely affected.

Resolution of Contradictions/ Collective Development in the System (Improving Schools)

Stories have dominant concern with educational aspect of school management were very few. . In one case, the academic leadership of the school head was reflected through the smooth running of the school despite the head teacher's absence – this was indicated as a success story. In the same story, the significance of relationship with the community was also highlighted.

In addition to the above mentioned story, some stories depict that the situation of the school can improve if the EDO wishes so. In another story, the intent, efforts and initiative of headteacher and their consequent impact get highlighted. Hope is found in headteacher's taking his role seriously, and with the support of concerned community (community support, their role and influence - are portrayed as ray of hope).

Construction of Object

All these stories eventually and inevitably also portray the dominant or commonly held conceptions of ‘object’. For instance, the stories confirm the typical observation that the attention and focus of the reforms remain on physical resource provision or acquisition. Furthermore, it also highlights the pre-dominant notion of the higher authorities and educational managers/ teachers about schools or classrooms as ‘life-less’ places, where there should be pin-drop silence. This is a typical definition of ‘discipline’ in these public schools (and even at many private schools).

‘Surprise (inspection) Visits’ highlighted through many of these narratives depict common culture – the overall understanding and assumption is that the whole system is corrupt and, therefore, visits are conceived as if to catch the criminals. This not only depicts the relationship between the district education management system and the schools, but also their conception of teaching and learning in schools, and their conception of their own role as district education managers (the conception of the object).

The analysis of stories by the managers (district-based and school-based) indicates strong overlaps: Politicization of the processes, misuse of power, low priority of educational outcomes, and enhanced acceptance of malpractices. The insights generated through the Narrative Analysis get even more enriched when analyzed in relation to the findings generated through the other data sets (e.g. image/ metaphor analysis, discourse analysis, etc.).

5.4.3 Conclusion

This chapter (Chapter 5) presented findings and analysis of organisational images, roles, discourse, and narratives, which helped in pattern seeking so as to explore to what extent and in what ways the emerging pattern reflect, resonate or refute the insights generated by the case study of the district education office in Sindh (Pakistan). The common insights and overlaps across the various data sets are quite evident.

CHAPTER SIX

*Analyzing and Synthesizing OL in Public Sector Using Activity
Theory (Research Findings – Phase IV)*

It is important to pull together and synthesize the overall analysis and discussion, which is what the present chapter offers, followed by the overall conclusion and knowledge contribution of the present study in the subsequent chapter (Chapter Seven). Therefore, the current chapter analyses and synthesizes the findings presented in the previous chapters, using Activity Theory as the conceptual framework. This chapter is, accordingly, organized in terms of the specific questions that the present study explored:

- How is the object of managing school education constructed and contested by district education managers?
- What are the contradictions and dilemmas in the activity system, and how are they resolved? How has the activity system (practice) evolved over a period of time?
- How do organizational artifacts – linguistic and material – mediate the processes of organizational learning?
- What are the linkages between individual and organisational learning? How are individuals' actions and collective activity aligned with each other?
- How do organisational rules and norms mediate the process of collective learning?

6.1 How is the Object of Managing School Education Constructed and Contested by District Educational Managers?

The concept of object is central to the activity which is always collective and object-oriented (Leont'ev, 1978). The object binds the whole activity system, and there is no activity without an object (Engeström & Kerosuo, 2007). The object could be defined as a purpose or goals to which the activity is directed. The purpose or goals could be explicitly articulated or identifiable (Rochelle, 1998). For the present study, the object is, 'School Management' (for provision of quality education to children).

The objects of human activity are both 'given' (referred to as 'official' object in this study) as well as perceived and/ or emergent (Engeström 1987; Blackler, Crump & McDonald 2000). In this case, the official object is articulated through an analysis of the education policy documents: *Management as A-specialized Field*; *Management as a 'Physical' Supervision of the Schools*; *Management as a 'Distributed Authority'*; and *Management as a 'Non-politicized' Activity*. The official or given object has been discussed in details in Chapter Three.

The education service as part of public service, by and large, is administered through the general legal framework defined by the Civil Service Rules, which are applicable not only to the educational managers but also equally applicable to the civil engineers working with brick and mortar. Currently, the Civil Service Rules 1975 are effective (with some amendments). These are the rules that broadly cover recruitment, promotion and other service matters related to the employees. This implies that ‘education as field’ is not specialized, at least, in terms of rules governing subjects (who act upon the object and transform it; subject and object mutually define each other).

In addition to that, at the higher level of education management, any civil servant can be appointed without his/ her prior experience or qualification in the field of education. This is a common practice in all the provinces and, in a way, contradicts the projection of educational policies about management as a ‘specialized field’. A senior manager asserted that the *“handling of educational management by generalists rather than by specialized professionals is one of the key challenges of the system”* (interview data). It is relevant to clarify here that at the district level, the management of education is mostly done by senior teachers appointed as managers.

Now, I come to the ‘perceived’ or ‘constructed’ object. The previous chapters have also present data about ‘how the object (school management) is perceived by the educational managers and key stakeholders’. What follows next, therefore, is the discussion and synthesis of the ‘perceived’ conceptions of the object.

Morgan (2006) asserts that, ‘all theories of organization and management are based on implicit images or metaphors’ (p.4). Thus, the discussion on the conceptualization of object is carried through using, analysing and synthesizing metaphors. This synthesis of the metaphorical data, therefore, serves the purpose of developing images/ narratives of organizations. Metaphorical analysis was preferred over thematic analysis, since themes by and large present a collection of similar ideas, whereas, a metaphor is an integrated system of ideas.

During individual interviews and informal conversations with the research participants, the participants were specifically asked to share their images and metaphors to describe the object of educational management in the public sector. The metaphors available in the data were clustered and synthesized either through using the most common labels or through developing new representative label.

6.1.1 DEOs as Post Offices

‘DEOs as Post Offices’ is one of the most commonly mentioned/ referred metaphors by the respondents working at different levels of official hierarchy, and with varying nature of experiences of the public sector/ education management. The most common/ shared understanding of the metaphor is given in Box 6.1.

Box 6.1: Contextual Information for Understanding Metaphor

Post- office has been one of the most commonly known public sector organizations in Pakistan. Post- office symbolizes information dissemination between sender and receiver without knowing and or having interests/ stakes in the information.

One of the respondents, a senior official, asserts:

The DEOs are post offices only. They have nothing to do except conveying the policies downward and requests upward.

The physical visit to most of the district education offices (that the researcher being an educationist has had the privilege to do so) also reveals that these organizations remain busy in ‘paper work’ all the time. One can easily notice the piles of files (generally spilling out of the file cabinets) and dumps of other materials (such as textbooks) waiting in these offices for further dispatch. The majority of the field based education officers mentioned that their main responsibility is to collect information and dispatch that information upward (for details, see Chapter Four). One of the district education officers explained that there are three kinds of communications from the higher authorities: a) Information sharing; b) Information seeking; and c) Orders for implementation. Table 6.1 presents some data collected from the participants and offers some comments based on field visits and other data.

Table 6.1: Pattern of Communication Directed from Higher Authorities at DEOs

Category/ Purpose	Response Pattern
Information	Major work falls under this category; it generally comes to the lower office as an

Category/ Purpose	Response Pattern
Seeking	<p>‘urgent’ matter. See respondents comments below:</p> <p><i>“DEOs are poorly organized and most of the time send wrong information...sometimes they send wrong nomination for training even”</i> (a senior govt. official)</p> <p><i>“Saab [term for addressing in respect] asks for information which is already in their office”</i> (a DEO)</p> <p><i>“The most difficult task is to get information from the head teachers”</i> (a supervisor/ field staff)</p> <p><i>“All the time we have meaningless proforma to fill and return”</i> (a head teacher)</p>
Orders for Implementation	<p>There seems an ‘unquestionable’ consensus that every order coming from the top needs to be implemented as it is, as reflected in the comments below:</p> <p><i>“Good or bad you have to implement the orders...the only way is that the order is withdrawn because some political pressure or something like this”</i> (a Deputy DEO)</p>
Information Sharing	<p>This category comprises of sharing of policy documents, amendments and new notifications. This communication is sent downwards. There is hardly any meeting organized to make sense of such otherwise important communications.</p>

Table 6.1 indicates that when it comes to communications, the form or format is quite significant; ‘the message’ may be considered important only when it requires any administrative follow up on their part. There is, otherwise, hardly any significance attached to the meaning or purpose of information in terms of its relation to educational process itself. Throughout, the educational policies have put emphasis on both, the administrative as well as educational roles for the education managers; for instance:

Education is a complex and highly specialized field, and its efficient administration requires technical competence, administrative ability, and understanding of educational developments in different countries of the world. (National Education Commission, 1959)

The various policies recurrently emphasize capacity building of managers for effective handling of both these dimensions of educational management. However, it seems evident that in practice, the focus has remained on the administrative functions, such as information seeking and its dissemination. The data from all phases of research validates the above inference; especially, the data presented on ‘Organizational Discourse’ (cf. Section 5.3).

As far as upward communication (i.e. from district offices to the higher ups) is concerned, it mainly involves applications related to teachers’ or staff’s service matters and some other institutional matters. The matters where decisions can be taken at the district level include transfer or posting, grant of leaves etc. which, in effect, provides a venue to district officials for earning social or economic capital and/ or other personal gains through delaying and/ or withholding the applications submitted by employees. Some of the participants satirically mentioned that ‘slowing down’ the file is an important skill on the part of the officers. “*File ko paeay lagana*” [to put wheels to your file] is one the most commonly understood strategy to get your application/ file move upward for approval. The ‘client’ has to select from among a number of methods to get a favorable decision and/ or to move their case upward, where decisions are taken. Box 6.2 provides the kind of options available to the client in many of the situations.

Box 6.2: List of Unfair Means/ Options to Get Work Done in DEOs

- Bribe (the amount depends on the level of clients’ need)
- Use of political power
- Combination of bribe and some linkages
- Flattery and small amount (depending on the nature of work)

Source: Summary of the data collected through field observations and interactions

Over the years, there has been a growing consensus (from the perspective of employees) that there is hardly any file (task of the clients) that can progress without such efforts/ intervention on part of the applicant.

The District Education Offices as post offices remain mainly concerned with the form and format of the correspondence (i.e. the technical aspects concerning the coordination or

communication), not with its content or message (purpose of the letter; educational cause). The letters or correspondence from the senior management is handled as ‘urgent’ and ‘important’. However, the emphasis remains on the form, not on the essence. ‘Client-related’ upward communication affords relevant authorities with opportunities for personal influence and/ or gains in most cases.

6.1.2 DEOs as ‘Police Stations’

The most prevalent construction of the object comes from the metaphor of ‘DEOs as a Police Station’. This metaphor was explicitly mentioned by a senior manager working at federal level, who has worked with district education officers in all the provinces. This metaphor intuitively synthesizes several dominant concepts that have emerged in the data (across all phases of research) and organizes these concepts in an insightful manner.

Box 6.3: Contextual Information for Understanding the Metaphor

The local police stations in Pakistan are seen by many as nexus of power and corruption, and as an instrument of the powerful to rule and monitor masses. Despite the fact that their stated purpose is to enforce law and order and to control crimes, these organizations are seen as too powerful to follow any rule.

The metaphor of ‘DEOs as Police Station’ is powerful in terms of highlighting several aspects of the management practice. In educational policies, there has been an increasing reference to ‘vested interests’ at various levels of the system (NEP, 1979), amounting to ‘pervasive corruption’, which is highlighted in the most recent policy also (NEP 2009). A very senior government officer commented:

We have changed our societal values so there is no corruption or less corruption in our country [satirical tone]. Corruption has been successfully replaced by ‘voluntary commission’, which is patronized in each nook and corner [of the public sector]. No one is feeling ashamed of being labelled as ‘corrupt’, rather feeling honored on serving the masters through greasing their palm [i.e. giving bribe].

The comment highlights that there is hardly any feeling of guilt when engaging in wrong practices such as monetary corruption, as these concepts have been replaced by words with more ‘positive’ connotation such as ‘voluntary commission’. Similar message was echoed by a senior education specialist when he said:

Sindh is difficult province. It is very difficult to implement any thing in Sindh. There are huge networks of corruption in the province. Some of these networks cannot even be identified as they are known as incentive systems.

There was almost a consensus among all the research participants that engaging in educational management at district level is an opportunity for higher social status (teachers enjoy a very low social status otherwise) and/ or other personal gains including monetary benefits (using unfair means).

The following comments depict how the nexus of power, lack of accountability at all levels, absence of applicable/ implementable rules, and vested interests – all these have created and strengthened the culture of power corruption in the DEOs.

Political intervention is mainly through transfer and posting – it uses bureaucracy as tool both for allies and enemies. They do not want to hear ‘NO!’ (Senior Bureaucrat)

90% of the management positions are allowed through illegal ways and through paying bribe, along with political backing...and those who have manage to do this, they have to regain their initial investment. (ADO)

...then the purpose is to serve who has appointed them – what the master says, will be carried out. If you have to do one wrong task, why not two more? And, why not for money? (Senior Bureaucrat)

There is no budget release for even basic things such as stationary and desktop. There are orders from the higher ups such as arrange an educational walk, get the guest tour of some schools, but you do not have petrol and/ or basic refreshment for the guests - how you will do it? From here, the corruption begins. (DEO)

As discussed in the case study (Chapter Four), the most common term which is used for surprise school visit by education officers in local language is ‘*Chappa*’ (the same word is used for police raids) – i.e. raid, an attempt to catch some one red-handed: “...*they usually*

visit the school on times when the possibility of ‘catching absent teachers is very high’...the way the police does” (FDG with DCs). Most of the research participants believed that the purpose of these visits was not educational improvement; rather, it was to create a context for gaining personal benefits – this came up quite clearly in focus group discussion with a group of district coordinators. Their observation was: *“Wrongdoings, such as absence from school, get settled without reporting to the higher-ups”*. Over the years, the tradition of inspecting schools for improving the quality of education (in which students learning outcomes were also assessed) has weakened immensely, amounting to extinction: *“...these days it is hard to imagine that DEOs will peep into or go inside the classroom”* (informal conversation with a DEO). In some cases, some unlawful practices are also allowed by DEOs. For instance, there is an established system of allowing for teachers’ long-term or complete absence from work while drawing their full salaries on the condition of sharing a certain percentage of their salaries with the DEOs – this arrangement/ system in local language is termed as the ‘*Visa System*’ (also mentioned in Chapter Four).

The data (already presented) indicate that rules and regulations supposedly governing the functioning of DEOs are outdated, complex, not translated into SOPs and, therefore, rarely consulted also. In this context, the lawful is what is sanctioned by the authority and the powerful (see figure 3.2). Thus, such disconnect between *defacto* and *dejure* provides venue for manipulation by the powerful and the ones in-authority. Gradually, the nexus between legal authorities and politicians has become stronger which has, by and large, contributed negatively to the quality of education in schools. For example, as data indicate hardly any teacher can be posted as educational manager without approvals/ recommendation of the politicians (the *parchi* system discussed in in Chapter Four).

The object constructed through the metaphor of DEOs as Police Station is more likely to engage with the actions ensuring and expanding the power-base, and ‘raiding’ places to catch wrongdoers for personal gains rather than any educational outcomes per se.

6.1.3 DEOs as *Entangled Wool or Chaos*

The actual articulation of the metaphor ‘DEO as an entangled wool’ came from a senior education specialist working in an international donor’s agency. The respondent has rich experience of many years of work with the provincial Departments of Education (DoEs) across Pakistan. She explains the metaphor as follows:

Education department is a knotted material with many loose and very tight knots. Sometimes, you do not find the thread, not sure from where to start. There are several factors ... complications...politics at various levels, both national and international. Ethnicity is another important factor - it is not just a matter of absence of capacity. (Education Specialist, INGO)

The data collected across different phases of research indicate various reasons for considering education as a ‘knotted’ material, including macro and micro politics, complexity of rules and the fragmentation in the larger society along ethnic lines. While illustrating this point, another senior officer with decades of experience in the public sector, commented on the complexity of the rules as follows: *“Rules are complicated and officials do not read or understand the rules. In addition to that, SOPs are not developed for the rules”*. This shows that complications in the functioning of the DEOs have different layers and levels. Another senior education specialist commented:

There are committed and good individuals in the sector and if you can pick those individuals, then you can work with the department easily. I have pleasant memories linked with the individuals in each province. (Education Specialist, INGO)

The above comments show that the issue of rule complexity is more critical than that of human resource capacity/ competence.

As already discussed, the researcher has had the opportunity of visiting a number of DEOs in, at least, three provinces of Pakistan. Most of these DEOs present quite a disorganized view (contributing to the images of entangled web). At most of the DEOs, there is no reception or front office or any other similar arrangement to guide people visiting the DEOs. Some offices do carry name plates of the officers but one can hardly find any signpost regarding the specific contact person for any specific task. Hence, not only rules but the very physical set up also reflects the complex nature of the organisational set up. A resonating metaphor used was that of ‘chaos’, which came from another senior officer working closely with the public sector education.

6.1.4 Public Sector as an ‘Elephant’

The articulation of public sector as an ‘Elephant’ came from a senior education officer working with various educational reform initiatives. The metaphor, however, offers a very insightful discussion about the function of DEOs. The metaphor has its deep cultural roots and, probably, because of this reason, is able to explain and capture insights about the study.

While explaining the reason for choosing this metaphor, the interviewee mainly emphasized the size of the public education sector, and also alluded to the parable of three blind men and an elephant; the parable originated in the Indian subcontinent but was, then, widely diffused (cf. Wikipedia). Though the parable has different versions and is well known across cultures, in its simplest form, it is a story of a group of three blind men who were exploring an elephant (by touch) to find out what it was like. Given the size of the elephant and limits of their sense (experience), everyone came to different understanding and conclusions. The parable appropriately explains the hugeness of the public sector of education (124000 teachers in primary schools only in Sindh) vis-à-vis the limited capacity on part of the system to effectively deal with such a huge mass. Reference to the parable also implies a dominant sense of fragmentation (in the absence of a complete picture) and lack of coordination among the key stakeholders and also those who work with the public sector, as articulated by a senior government officer from a research based organization that there is *“fragmentation or lack of linkages between ministries working in related areas”*. This observation regarding lack of linkages across sectors is echoed emphatically in other interviews, too. At another instance, a senior bureaucrat laments:

Across sector, fragmentation contributes to failure of many policies...working in silos...
Within the department, the fragmentation is also vivid. There are no tasks for the whole organization; tasks are designed for individuals...organizations are not evaluated as organizations. (A senior government officer from public sector health department)

The size of the elephant is closely associated with the power of the animal also. One of the Urdu proverbs is that only the decision of the powerful rules. Power coupled with lack of professional competence opens up venues for the misuse of power (the issue has been discussed by Niaz, 2011, in details in his latest book), which I will be discussing in details later in the chapter. When it comes to size, another related aspect is lack of agility in taking/modifying directions due to the huge size of the system. The public sector of education has a history of reform failures, with each educational policy accepting the failure of the earlier policy (see the NEP 1959, 1979, 1992, 2009). Yet, another aspect is the huge consumption of

resources without clear understanding regarding the return on the input or resources; on the contrary, the impact of educational input is evident through the failure of meeting targets set by each policy.

The metaphor can still be extended further: In South Asian culture, ‘elephant’ is strongly associated with being royal and/ or expensive; it is considered as a ‘*shahee saware*’ (a carrier for the king or royalty) – a strong implication of which is that the elephant is not meant for ‘public’ service. These associations capture and highlight the perceptions regarding the apathy of the government towards public interest.

6.1.5 DEO as a Learning Space/ Learning to become an Officer

The metaphor of ‘DEO as a learning space’, in effect, captures a host of concepts present in the network of empirical data. ‘Learning space’ as a metaphor was understood as a context of learning, and it also refers to the ideas that are more likely to grow and flourish in such context.

The data collected in all phases indicate that over the years, the DEOs have learned new ways and means to engage with activities leading to personal gains. This has been discussed throughout the current thesis; however, the notion of ‘learning space’ presents it more sharply in terms of workplace vocabulary indicating concepts and strategies promoting and strengthening corrupt networks. The response of the participants during individual interviews and FGDs to following question was quite open and upfront: ‘If we induct a foreigner/ teacher in the DEO for some years, what will the person learn over the years?’ Some of the responses were: “*He will learn how to delay any task*”; “*...how to keep different bosses happy at the same time*”; “*how to earn personal benefits while saving one’s position*”; “*one will learn how public sector actually works*”. One of the EDOs asserted, “*...there is not much that you can learn as a teacher though you have worked for forty years...however, when you move to DEO, you know how things work and what means what*”. Some minor comments were also made in relation to gaining knowledge about educational statistics and improved skills or personal organization and keeping up professional outlook.

6.2 What are the Contradictions and Dilemmas in the Activity System, and how are they Resolved?

Engeström (2001) has emphasized the central role of contradictions as sources of change and development in the activity system. Contradictions indicate opportunities for system's potential for further development and growth, depending on how the system resolves these contradictions. The concept of contradiction has its roots in the notion of dialectics as conceptualized by Hegel and Marx. This view extends the idea of continuous change and improvement i.e. by resolving the contradictions in any human system.

The contradictions in the activity system (public education management) have been discussed throughout the study. For instance, the **contradictions** discussed in Chapter Three include contradictions rooted in the historical development of the management practice (for example, the colonial legacy versus future orientation) and contradictions between culture of power in governance and requirements of public service delivery (for more details, see Chapter Three).

Education management as an activity system is a venue of contested interests and **conflicting purposes** – e.g. interests of the local politicians, managers, teacher unions, clerks/ clerk association, other pressure groups, donors, NGOs, teachers, influential people of the community/ landlords. The interests or purposes in relation to the activity system range from the betterment of education to money-making and corruption. The data collected in the third phase highlights these contradictions through organizational images, roles, discourse and through narratives of organizational experiences (see Chapter 5).

As discussed earlier, management is commonly understood and presented as a neat organizational chart by educational managers. However, the data (especially, field observations) indicate the contradictions in the standard organisational hierarchy. According to official hierarchy, the decisions are supposed to be taken at the highest level of authority in a bureaucratic structure. However, in many situations, the actual decision making is heavily influenced by 'clerical staff' members who are the custodians of the records (information and documents) within the system. Despite being at the lowest level of the hierarchy as clerks, they are usually called the '*clerk badshah*' – i.e. the Clerk King – this reflects not only the power and authority they tend to exercise within the system but also their attitude. A Clerk is generally the stable unit within the system, who also then has the history (i.e. the organisational memory); the officers, on the other hand, keep changing – they do not generally have access to the historical reference. This gives another kind of power to the clerks.

The **official or stated purpose of the activity system** is 'provision of quality education'. However, data indicates that most of the DEOs do not attach importance to

processes related to the ‘provision of quality education’. The tools to observe/ study teaching and learning processes either do not exist or are very limited and narrow i.e. only focus on the administrative aspects (for example, see Box 4.6 regarding reporting on the field visits).

The document analysis and follow up clarification show that formal reward and punishment system is not aligned to the stated purpose of the organization. For example, the appraisal of teachers is done through an old-age proforma known as ‘Annual Confidential Report’ (ACR), which has little to do with teachers’ performance. In addition to that, most of the managers do not have the necessary competence to appropriately use the tool (ACR) for teacher appraisal. Thus, teacher performance is not even linked to teacher promotion. The same is true for educational manager functioning at any layer of hierarchy.

Education prepares a child for a future that is ten to twenty years ahead from the present state – the external environment is rapidly changing. However, the current activity system does not reflect such futuristic orientation. This is evident from the processes and pace of curriculum review and textbooks development. For instance, school curriculum was revised in 2006, yet the province has still not been able to develop textbooks for all the students.

The review of donor funded educational projects shows that most of these reform projects made an attempt to introduce contradictions in the system – usually through changing the tools. The system comes across as quite flexible in terms of allowing the new tools, methods or procedures to be implemented for a short while. However, the changes remain temporary and external to the system, and do not become integrated into the system’s procedures. As soon as the project gets over, the system continues working in a, more or less, similar manner as it has been doing so earlier.

In terms of contradictions between rules and norms, both have fully survived without interacting and influencing each other much. The rules are not only quite old, but they are also quite generically applied across all the various sectors – this is the very reason why they are considered as insensitive to the specific, emerging or changing context’s needs. This is the reason why, perhaps, the local norms prevail – the contradiction between rules and norms has only intensified over the period of time.

How these contradictions have been discussed in the concluding paragraph of the case study: The discussion highlights that a) the engagement with the official/ given object has considerably reduced; b) the disconnect between the ‘given’/ official object and the ‘constructed object’ has widened; and c) new tools (such as ‘teacher on visa’ and ‘*parchi*

system’) indicating corruption learning have emerged. The discussion indicates that the structural contradictions have, by and large, strengthened. If there is any resolution of the contradiction, it has come through shrinking of the official object. For example, current policies (in- practice) have, more or less, withdrawn the academic functions from DEOs, such as obligatory academic inspection of the schools.

The following sections illustrate the key tensions and dilemmas as experienced by the educational managers working in the public sector of education. These tensions explain the major dilemmas faced by the district educational managers.

6.2.1 Where do I belong as an Educational Manager – A Bureaucrat or a Teacher?

The educational managers at the district level are primarily recruited from among teachers. They have been teachers for several years and they can also be reverted as teachers (on the same pay and scale). Reverting to teaching position is a bad dream, in most of the cases, for many who have joined the management positions. One of the main reasons for a strong preference for the management positions, as discussed earlier, is the poor social status of teachers. Teaching as a profession is closely associated with service and sacrifice: ‘Teaching is a prophetic profession’ – it is a common adage throughout the country. At the same time, however, the position of a teacher is associated with low social status. There have been a number of seminars, conferences and policy dialogues in the province that have picked up this theme of low status as an important theme to be addressed.

On the other hand, working as an educational manager implies joining the powerful ranks or sections of the society, which is largely characterized as feudal culture. Several authors relate the love for power to the colonial experience (See Ali & Babur, 2010, where educational management is discussed as a ‘Colonial Legacy’). The Education Policy 1979 made a similar observation:

Our system of educational management and supervision is a legacy of the past and is not equipped to cope with the increasing and changing demands of education in the country. (NEP, 1979)

In his book, *‘The Culture of Power and Governance of Pakistan (1947-2008)’*, based on his doctoral work, Niaz (2011) has argued that after the British Rule, Pakistan has slowly gone back to its primitive cultures of power in many ways (see Chapter Four for details). It is quite intriguing that the majority of the success stories narrated by

district education officers is related to their role as a teacher. Yet, they aspire for the management position and educational management is modelled, in most cases, by them as ‘civil bureaucracy’: *“We do not have the same resources and authority as the district management has; how can we do our work effectively?”* (DEO)

The kind of authority in the minds of the educational managers seems related to administrative authority, not seen as professional expertise related to pedagogy or educational matters. In an educational event, when a teacher (who was part of a teacher association and, thereby, more courageous than his fellow colleagues) made a comment on a district education officer, the response of the officer was, *“Your job is not to observe and comment on the actions of [your] officers”*.

6.2.2 Whose Purpose should be served?

As the data indicate, the major tension for an educational manager is to manage cross purposes and expectations of the influential players such as local politicians, teachers unions and donors, besides managing the higher office. The official purpose (in operational context) is articulated through notifications and orders both, written and communicated on phone regarding which the following comment is insightful: *“Sometimes, officers ask to do what is not legal and can be a problem at a later stage...but we have to do that”* (Field Officer).

From the lens of educational managers, the influence usually termed as ‘interference’ from politicians at all levels, has been on the rise for many years: *“...dealing with the politicians is one of the major challenges...as they are not ready to listen and want compliance of their orders at any cost”* (FGD, DEOs).

Hofstede’s (1983) research has shown that Pakistan can be categorized among the countries which have high power distance. ‘High Power Distance’ means that the person in less power is willing to accept and maintain a distance from the authority. Empirical observations show that the higher the inflexibility of power, the higher the respect. Even the officers who are ‘polite’ are mostly seen as rather ‘weak’ officers. The most recent educational policy has reflected the prevailing situation as:

Education sector management shall be left to the education managers without any intervention from politicians and generalist civil servants; only then the education managers can be held accountable for outcomes. (NEP 2009)

The central dilemma for educational managers is how to accommodate all the claims of power from different players and yet demonstrate their authority and power (on a similar pattern). Failing in managing the different claims can bring in severe consequences for the manager.

6.2.3 What should Guide my Actions – Written or Unwritten Rules?

Public sector organizations are bureaucratic organizations and, therefore, one of the major expectations is to go by well-defined rules. The adherence to rules, as discussed, seems quite problematic for several reasons such as rules being quite generic rules, outdated and without detailed SoPs. Yet, these rules provide the legal framework and can be invoked by the relevant authorities or by court at any time: *“In recent years, the departmental burden to deal with court cases has risen significantly”* (Senior Govt. Officer).

There is a strong hierarchy of norms and unwritten rules that comes into play in all situations of decision making and actions. The culture of power has proliferated into all levels of organisational hierarchy and has implications for all processes in the education department, including those of teaching and learning. Questioning and challenging the authority can bring detrimental consequences. The data suggest that, at times, even seeking explanations is not very advisable. Just like questions are not encouraged in the classrooms, likewise, questions are not encouraged in the official meetings as well: *“Asking question is very risky...and why to take that risk?”* (Deputy DEO).

Contradictions mostly co-exist within the system. In cases where they get resolved, power is a deciding factor in such resolution. However, the contradictions discussed above have more or less remained unresolved over the years; in fact, they have become even stronger. Moreover, it also seems that the district education managers have been taking on contradictory roles without much difficulty, as could be expected, given the Hegelian view of contradictions described below.

Hoffmann (2005), in his paper, ‘The Curse of the Hegelian Heritage: “Dialectic,” “Contradiction,” and “Dialectical Logic” in Activity Theory’, has offered very pertinent criticism of the Hegelian heritage. He argues for using ‘old Platonic idea’ (p.23) – that is the dialectical method is based on complementary processes. Similarly, Zeera (2001), using the arguments from Klaus Riegel, Michel Basseches and James Fowler, also put emphasis on ‘internal relatedness’ (p.117) as a basis for dialectics in contrary to opposition. Thus, an activity system can continue without resolving the contradictions: Igira and Aanestad (2009)

have indicated the possibility where some contradictions in the old activity system were not resolved but, in fact, were inherited by the new activity system.

6.3 How do Organizational Artefacts – Linguistic and Material – Mediate the Processes of Organizational Learning?

Though the activity is object-oriented, the subjects do not act upon the object (school management) directly; rather, it is mediated through artefacts – both conceptual and practical. The core function of these artefacts, thus, is mediation – all actions of the subjects are artefact mediated; the artefacts are produced and transformed during the activity (Kutti, 1996).

A wide range of artefacts is used for managing teachers, allocating resources, dealing with the community as well as for student learning (see Chapter 4). Some examples of the tools for the present study are: Official proformas for different purposes such as school inspection form and ACRs; meetings; and '*parchi*' (recommendation slip), etc. More details are provided in Table 4.3 (cf. Chapter 4). The data indicate that the use of official forms is very straight jacket, narrow and limited. The point is well-illustrated in Box 4.6, which presents the standard statements produced by using school visit form. The key official templates/ forms have not been modified and appropriated for many years (e.g. see ACRs). The process of official tool development is mostly top-down.

Wartofsky (1979) asserts that while transforming the object, the subjects develop their own cognitive artefacts named as 'mental models'. Mental models, usually, refer to 'what works here'. The tool of FAQs was particularly helpful in teasing out cognitive artefacts, as noted by Leadbeater (2004) that discourse at workplace provides original insights into the activity system. The study indicates several generalizations highlighting the 'mental models' such as: "*system he kharab hey*" [translation: the whole system is corrupt]; "*her koe paisa bananay key chaker mein hey*" [translation: everyone is interested in making money]; "*boss boss hota hey*" [translation: Boss is boss, implying that he/ she can do anything]. Conversely, from the data generated by study, it was evident that merit, transparency and observance of rules – these are not their expectations. These generalizations indicate that the expectations of the subject/ actors about the outcomes are not positive.

The study indicates that the usage and the development of the artefacts is not neutral (inherent element of power is attached to all these processes). For example, transfer or posting is an important management tool, which is hardly used for any rational reasons. There is almost a consensus that hardly any teacher can be posted as educational manager without

the recommendation from the politician and “*mostly these recommendations are secured after paying reasonable amount as bribe*” (interview data).

6.4. What are the Linkages between Individual and Organisational Learning? How are Individuals’ Actions and Collective Activity Aligned with each other?

The present study, using the Activity Theory Framework, conceptualizes ‘learning’ as a collective activity; it does not make hard distinctions between individual and organizational learning, and it understands that a dialectical relation exists between individual and collectivity. Though some of the earlier work done in the public sector identifies that individual learning does not make any contribution to the organizational learning per se (e.g. see Ali et al), I think the authors’ comment is rooted in the dichotomy of individual and collective learning, whereas, the present study conceptualizes the relationship as dialectical.

At organizational level, DEOs do not have many explicit mechanisms to develop and sustain ‘shared purpose’ and alignment between and among individuals. The present study indicates several manifestations of this lack of shared purpose. For example, at physical level, there is no common room available for the staff to socialize; also, there is hardly any library or common knowledge repository which could be consulted by these supposedly knowledge workers. The analysis of official meetings indicates that the main purposes of the official meetings are to guarantee urgent dissemination of some agenda items and to ensure compliance for that matter. In essence, most of the official meetings are ‘verbal versions’ of an official letter giving out some instructions on what to do – these are neither interactive sessions nor do they encourage participation or feedback.

Fragmentation, lack of concerted and coordinated efforts, duplication of resources and efforts, lack of coordination and communication – these are common responses in relation to identification of issues faced by district education officers (see TNA reports of ESRA and ED-Links Projects for details). Most of the other public documents describing educational management also refer to the culture of the public sector as a culture of isolation and fragmentation in (e.g. see Mohammad & Kumari, 2005). People work in silos; their actions mostly do not come across as part of a coordinated effort, despite the fact that the activity may require necessary collaboration – e.g. the development of an Education Sector Plan. One of the senior public servants commented that “*the system is designed to produce fragmentation and if we have any problem with that, we need to redesign the system*”.

The actions of district managers, as the current study reveals, are mostly inspired and driven by individual (personal) motives or those of the power figures' in the system. Their actions – which could be submission, compliance or some other coercive action – are mainly directed towards seeking personal gains. For instance, the action could be sudden inspection of a school (to catch the absent teachers red handed), deliberate delay in processing applications, removal of documents from files and, in some cases, destruction of documents or data to safeguard personal interests or interests of an influential person. Within the overall context of power and corruption in governance, these actions represent a larger majority of the multi-voiced purposes, and are likely to get a larger or collective acceptance and alignment within the larger activity of management (i.e. pursuit of perceived object rather than official object). The only other aspect where one can notice some form of alignment, as far as the official object is concerned, is information/ data gathering and dispatching – however, in this case, the spirit of cooperation is mostly ritualistic; the most important aspect of this exercise is compliance in letter only – one can share faulty data just to ensure compliance. This corresponds very well with the dominant image of DEO as a post-office.

Individual actions can affect collective actions only in cases where these are top driven. For instance, if the Secretary of Education is a powerful figure and has political backing/ patronage, the team of employees working under the Secretary can get the changes implemented at a collective level.

6.5 How do Organisational Rules (formal/ written) and Norms (informal/ unwritten) mediate the Process of Collective Learning?

6.5.1 Mediation of Rules

Public sector organisations are considered to be governed by formal lawful authority. In Pakistan, after the Constitution of 1973 and federal legislation, provincial legislation has been the highest legal authority. With the most recent 18th Amendment in the Constitution of 1973, the provincial Civil Service Act that governs all the civil service employees (whether they are from the education or fishery department) becomes the key reference document for all provincial services.

There seems to be a consensus among the researchers that the rules governing the public sector are complicated and outdated. The National Commission on Governance Reform 2007

has, therefore, stressed the need for regular review of the rules for updating, simplification and more effective enforcement of these rules. Within the education sector, the NEP 1979 has noted:

The rule and regulations governing day to day administration of the schools continue to remain cumbersome and detrimental to efficient functioning of the system.

Most of the rules that govern the education department are quite generic, as these rules aim to deal with all the provincial services. One of the respondents in his interview commented: *“Rules are the same for health, education and mining...they [government] do not see any specific requirements of the education department, which is harmful”*.

The above comments indicate that the education department is patterned, by and large, as other public service departments. However, there are some purpose-specific legislations that are approved/ passed from time to time e.g. the ‘Right to Education Act’ – these Acts would require new Rules of Business (RoBs) and Standard Operation Procedures (SoPs) or Amendments in the rules, however, obviously taking a longer route, as reflected in the comment: *“The process of legislation and rules development, understandably, is quite lengthy, cumbersome and slow* (Interview data, Senior Bureaucrat). This explains why there is no further law development, so far, on the Right to Education Act since 2013.

The analysis of the rules/ official proformas indicates that the majority of the rules/ proformas are process-oriented, not performance related – this has had severe implications, resulting in the current ‘lack of performance culture’ in the public sector. One pertinent example is the annual proforma used to report the ‘performance’ of public sector employees called as Annual Confidential Report (ACR). Very recently, on the recommendation of NCGR, the provincial governments have changed the nomenclature of ‘Annual Confidential Report’ (ACR) to ‘Performance Evaluation Report’; it is difficult to envisage any change in the situation because of this change in the mere nomenclature. The implementation of rules, as already discussed at great length, seems quite problematic. One interviewee mentioned that *“the implementation of rules is quite selective – inspired by vested interests or personal gains”*.

As the field observations indicate, in the context of DEOs, only a small section of employees are more aware of the relevant rules. This may be surprising for people outside of the context but there is hardly any formal requirement on part of the educational managers to know the

rules. To illustrate this point, when the district education managers are recruited, they do not get any orientation to the rules. During the case study, one of the clerks commented that “*over the years, the possibility of any officer knowing the rules is becoming lesser...they [officers] simply do not bother about the rules.*” The field observations and other data indicate that the clerical staff in the office is generally more aware of the rules. One of the reasons of their relative power in the office (despite being quite low in terms of the organisational hierarchy) is rooted in their ability to quote/ use rules (see earlier discussions).

The generic nature of rules, selective implementation, limited understanding of rules by educational managers, absence of performance orientation and lack of accountability mechanism have seriously contributed to the creation of an inefficient and ‘lethargic system’, with inherent disrespect to merit. This has been noted by several respondents and endorsed by existing voices on the subject. One of the respondents commented that if one has worked for some years in the government sector, he/she will definitely hate working hard.

6.5.2 Mediation of Norms

Norms, as described in detail Chapter Four, are the unwritten rules, i.e. ‘the way we do thing here’, which often get followed more religiously than the written rules. This finding echoes the doctoral work (The Un-official Performance of Official Business in Pakistan) undertaken by Khan (2012). The main finding of his research work is that social norms, such as clientelism and personal relationships, greatly influence the behavior of the government officers and, thus, they take decisions which run counter to official expectations.

There is a common rule of thumb which says: “*Follow what is written on the wall, not what is written in the documents*”. In the present case of DEO, ‘what is written on the wall’, in effect, means the ‘unwritten rules’. The Table 4.5 (Chapter Four) portrayed the social context of the DEOs with the help of a number of specialized terms that are generally used in the context of public sector in Pakistan and, especially, the Sindh province (and in DEOs context). The ‘specialized terms’ were related to both, work and workplace relations. The work related terms indicated that official work is not performed based on the rules and division of labor. The majority of the respondents mentioned that “*they have to do whatsoever they are asked to do and the way they are asked to do*”. Some kinds of work/ assignments have more possibilities of personal gains (‘*khancha*’), and continuing with such positions requires sustained approval of the ‘boss’. Thus, pleasing the boss (*chamchagiri*) and, therefore, ‘compliance’ is one of the important values to observe. When the purpose is to

comply and submit, then, better suggestions or solutions and/ or innovations are not acceptable. ‘Who’ is saying is more important, as opposed to the foundations of critical thinking premised in the Western contexts. Depending on the nature of power, any powerful person can ignore, bend and discard the legal/ official rules. Since ‘boss is always right’ is the norm, critical thinking is not desirable. There is hardly any space to question the person in power/ authority. One respondent has explicitly articulated in his/ her interview that, *“Questioning is objection-ing [criticizing] ... you will have to say ‘yes’ even if you cannot do it or you will not do it.”* Peer-peer interactions, by and large, do not result in positive learning.

This chapter (Chapter 6) synthesized the main findings and discussion of the study through responding to the key questions of the study. The next and final chapter of the thesis (Chapter 7) provides the conclusion to the report through highlighting the key Knowledge Contribution of the study and its implications.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusions and Knowledge Contributions of the Study – to Organisational Learning Theory and Activity Theory

The current chapter (Chapter Seven) discusses how the present study has attempted to contribute to the theory of Organisation Learning, and also to the Activity Theory as a methodological framework for organizational studies. Some contribution in the domain of research methodology is also discussed. The chapter also discusses the limitations of the study and proposes some future studies. Finally, implications of the study are presented, followed by concluding remarks.

7.1 Knowledge Contributions to the Theory of OL

The following paragraphs discuss how, and in what ways, the present study has contributed to the existing knowledge base on OL Theory by addressing the knowledge gaps identified at the inception of this project. The knowledge gaps identified and discussed in Chapter One, therefore, provide the organizing framework for the current chapter (Chapter 7).

7.1.1 Addressing the Knowledge Gap One: Insights into Organisational Learning

Processes

As already discussed, within the existing literature on OL, there is an over-emphasis on learning outcomes in place of learning processes, and that also on positive outcomes mostly – e.g. OL as a source of competitive advantage (Moingeon & Edmondson, 1996) or key to management innovation (Stata, 1989). This ‘positive-outcome’ bias has resulted in two kinds of closely inter-related consequences for the theory of OL; these are: a) ‘how’ learning takes place in organization is under researched, and b) ‘what is being learnt’ other than positive outcomes is, by and large, either ignored or analyzed in terms of categories other than learning.

Addressing Knowledge Gap One implies: The OL theory needs to be enriched through a nuanced understanding of OL processes

The present study has used practice-based approach to address the above negative consequences of ‘positive- outcome’ bias in the literature. The present study makes a contribution to both these aspects through empirical work done in the context of public sector in Pakistan.

Organisational Learning Processes

The key concepts generally associated with OL involve experimenting and innovating; improving on ‘errors’; availability of a variety of learning resources and democratic access to these resources; and opportunities for reflections and reconceptualization, etc. The DEOs, on the other hand, are associated more with compliance and submission. Earlier studies (e.g. Mohammad & Kumari, 2009) highlight that the public sector of education in Pakistan promotes obedience and followership rather than learning – the question that the current study poses: Is becoming more submissive *not* learning? Against this backdrop, what is being learnt by DEOs is discussed in the next few lines.

The learning processes mainly include the development and use of social/ cultural artefacts (both, conceptual and material). The cultural artefacts mediate between the individual and collective learning. The individuals in the organization interact and engage with the ‘collective infrastructure of knowing’. The collective infrastructure of knowing includes shared conceptual and practical tools, social structures, rules, norms and also division of labor (Blackler et al., 1999). DEOs, as part of a much larger public sector, do not have access to even the most common official tools relevant to both, the educational and administrative aspects. For instance, they may have some notification files (a folder with standing orders, instructions notifications, etc.) but mostly do not have available to them the most important documents such as curriculum and educational policy documents (Ali et al., 2006), and the other rules are too complex to be understood or implemented at all levels – this, by implications, is reflective of their limited possibilities of interacting with ‘official object’.

It is quite evident that in the absence of access to such important rules and policies, individuals’ interpretation of the situation and of their roles comes into play – this explains why, in most cases, the district education officers ignore rules and follow the ‘verbal order’ of the local politicians or officers or rely on their clerks/ assistants.

What is that ‘Learning’ which is done by/ in the Organization?

Given the dominant conception of learning mainly as planned activity or formal process and its association with positive outcomes, the theory of organizational learning has heavily been influenced by and biased towards learning as a positive enterprise, resulting in ignoring other forms of learning, generally, negative and/ or taking place informally, such as learning corruption and learning to avoid tasks or responsibilities. This implicit process is explicated in Fig. 7.1.

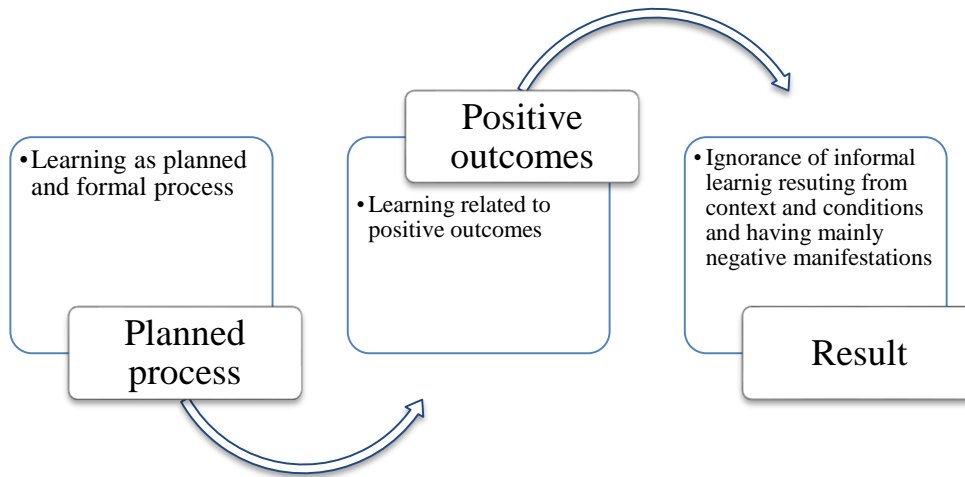


Fig. 7.1: Organisational Learning defined as ‘Positive Outcomes’

As a result, the available literature on organizational learning is quite elaborate on one kind of learning that is mostly associated with positive outcomes; therefore, one can find levels of learning (single and double loop learning) and kinds of learning (generative and exploitative learning) abundantly referred to and used in the literature.

In the OL literature, some scholars have contributed to OL theory through investigating organizational processes hindering or limiting organizational learning. For example, Levitt and March (1988) have observed that organizations, during the course of time, may develop competence in certain domain (expertise in doing certain tasks). This competence may prevent these organizations to look for any alternatives or do some experimentation relevant to their areas of expertise, which means holding back the organization from learning. This is known as the ‘competency trap’, as introduced by Levitt and March (1988). Later organizational research has also contributed to this aspect of the literature by identifying some other traps. This is an important illustration of how organization may avoid learning unconsciously. However, organizations may develop ‘defensive routines’ to deal with learning phenomenon at organizational level. The organizational defensive routines refer to any procedure or policy that prevents organizational members from facing embarrassment or threat. The ‘defensive routines’ are ‘anti-learning and overprotective’ and transform organizations into limited learning system (Argyris, 1998).

Despite some references to organizational traps and defensive routines, OL Theory, by and large has remained associated with the learning as positive phenomenon. The theory has largely ignored or suppressed the kind of learning that could be seen as negative – such as

learning corruption, inefficiency, rigidity or apathy (as in the case of the public education sector in Pakistan). This conceptualization of learning as a project (a planned activity) rather than an ubiquitous phenomenon or process (as proposed by Lave & Wegner, 1991) and its association with positive outcomes, has negative consequences for theorizing organizational learning, as it cannot take into account the kind of learning associated more with the context and conditions of learning.

Pokharel and Hult (2010) have identified four different types of organizational learning in the public sector:

1. Conscious (OL as project),
2. Façade (false sense of learning),
3. Unaware (not knowing that learning is taking place), and
4. Absent learning (no learning is taking place).

The kinds of OL in public sector identified by Pokharel and Hult (2010) include false learning, unaware and absent learning, yet the construct of learning, by and large, remains tightly associated with positive connotations. There is hardly any mention of ‘negative learning’ by the organizations.

In the context of public sector organizations, Yusoff (2005) has argued that hopelessness among employees may replace positive learning outcomes with negative learning. Some researchers, such as Ortenblad (2011), have alluded that learning can be negative also, yet this kind of learning (which is negative) has not been analyzed rigorously. This is where the current study makes a significant contribution.

The current study has addressed this deficient focus by using insights drawn from the educational theory, more specifically, with reference to the three curriculum orientations (Eisner, 2002). In Fig. 7.2, the exhibit describes three possible kinds of learning (agendas) adapted from Eisner (2002).

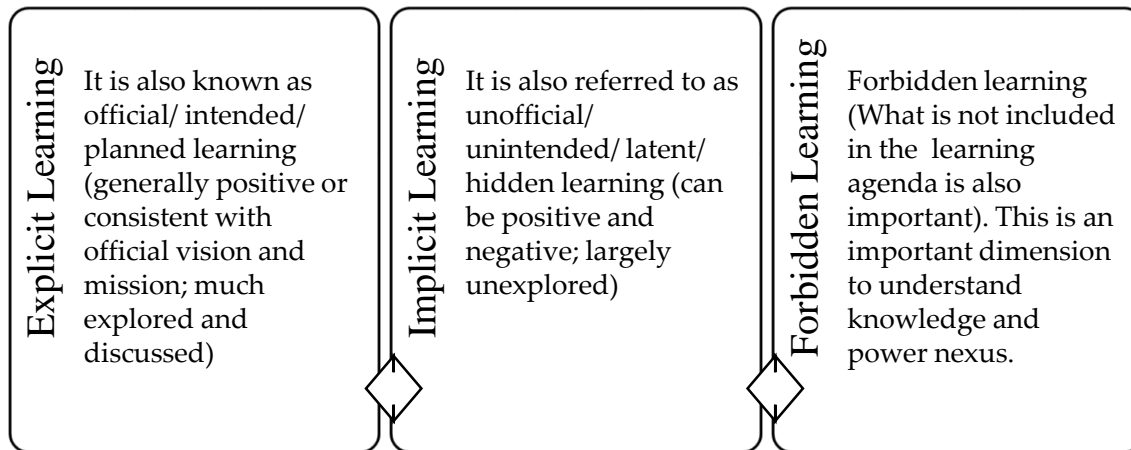


Fig. 7.2: Types of Learning adapted from Eisner's (2002) Curriculum Orientations

The kind of collective learning that is taking place through the development and use of cultural artefacts is linked to the key attentions/ focus of the individual actions and interpretations of the object of the activity system. There is ample evidence in the study that the educational managers, by and large, focus on playing the power game, rent seeking and (mis)using the authority for their personal benefits rather than public service delivery. Several collective tools have been developed and used that, as discussed earlier, support power play, rent seeking and personalization of public assets. The current study reveals that collective learning could be an intricate combination of explicit, implicit and forbidden learning – further elaboration of this point is provided in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Elaboration of Types of Learning (adapted from Eisner, 2002) in the Context of DEOs

Explicit Learning (Learning as an agenda)	Implicit Learning	Forbidden Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Individuals learn management skills such as correspondence, observing official procedures and filing system, and dealing with public and job related pressures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Employees learn rather new ways of ensuring vested interests while staying out of bounds; new repertoires of pleasing bosses and politicians ✓ Keeping the boss happy as a major part of the perceived role and job strategy - 'never say "no" to the boss'. 'Say "yes, sir" even if the assignment is not possible or you do not intend to do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Challenging or arguing against ideas/ proposals coming down from higher authorities ✓ Saying 'no' to

Explicit Learning (Learning as an agenda)	Implicit Learning	Forbidden Learning
✓ Managerial understanding of some concepts such as dropout rates, missing facilities and gender parity index etc.	✓ Harsh and rude attitude towards subordinates ✓ Questioning boss can lead you to lose the current position of authority and other privileges available because of the position ✓ Technology of slowing down a process to demonstrate authority and/or financial gains	orders from the authority even if it does not fall in legal jurisdiction ✓ Decision making needs to be based on data i.e. data driven
✓ Identity as manager or officer – i.e. person having authority	✓ Power grabbing/ controlling mainly through holding back information ✓ There is no need to plan ahead, just implementing what is coming from up is enough	✓ Planning and priorities setting
✓ Most frequently used rules and regulations	✓ Lower levels of hierarchy do not need to learn anything – as they are required to just implement what has come down from the top	✓ Challenging the role distribution
✓ Policies, Precedence and templates are helpful	✓ How to minimize personal responsibility?	
✓ Going by the book	✓ Identification of the mistakes is purview of the boss only; the vector of mistakes identification is down ward only	✓ Informality with authorities
✓ What are stored in the organizational memory are not new routines, procedures and new versions of implementation frameworks	✓ Challenging rules is upsetting the system and going mad at personal level only ✓ Responsiveness towards clients has no link with the reward system rather submission to the authority is the key value to be observed religiously	✓ Demonstration that you have brighter ideas than your seniors
✓ Individuals use ‘organizational memory’ relating to what works	✓ What is the purpose of organization does not	✓ Challenging assumptions and decisions

Explicit Learning (Learning as an agenda)	Implicit Learning	Forbidden Learning
practically here	guide day to day actions and decision making	from the top on the basis
✓ New member quickly start following the ‘norms’ of the organizations.	✓ Performance or putting extra efforts has no reward of any practical significance ✓ The claims in policy and inaugural speeches have nothing to do with practical decision making ✓ Avoiding mistakes is important ✓ Learning is an extra work – why should I put extra work when there is no reward for that?	that these may have some flaws and can be improved ✓ Authority can reward merit and performance

In an interesting cross cultural study in 10 countries by Aycan et al. (2000), it was observed that the managers in Pakistan assume low proactivity (i.e. initiative-taking to achieve job related goals), low participation (assumption about desires to be consulted) and low responsibility seeking (whether or not employees accept and seek responsibility at job) on part of their employees as compared to the neighboring country, India (though both the countries have been together for more than 200 years).

7.1.2 Addressing Knowledge Gap Two: Study of Power Mediation in the Processes of Learning

Another critical area of under-treatment in the existing OL theory is the crucial nexus between power and OL. How power mediates the organizational learning processes becomes very important question in general but, especially, in the context of the public sector organisations in Pakistan, where OL processes take place in the landscape of differential power positions and relations.

Addressing Knowledge Gap Two implies: The OL theory needs to be enriched through an enhanced understanding of how power mediates the processes of learning

There are three major ways through which power mediates OL processes in the public sector: a) influencing the motives of the individual actions, b) allocating permissibility/ preferences to the choice and use of cultural artefacts, and c) guiding the interpretations of the situation. The public sector perpetuates and reproduces power culture in the broader context.

The overriding and interconnected motives for individual actions, as the study indicates, are ‘keeping the boss happy’ and using official power for personal gains. These motives initiate and promote different kinds of OL. Organizational learning usually refers to the identification of mistakes and their rectification which is generally referred to as ‘single loop’ learning (see Argyris, 1977). In the context of the DEOs, the identification of mistakes, by and large, comes under the purview of the boss (powerful) only i.e. the vector of mistake-identification is downward only (from authorities to subordinates). These findings corroborate well with some other studies done in Pakistan. For example, Bashir, Khattak, Hanif and Chohan’s (2011) insightful study done in the public sector of Pakistan, involving 1762 employees working in different PSOs, revealed that 92% of the employees did not report any wrong doing within or outside the organization and 33% of the employees perceived negative consequences of doing so. Challenging assumptions and decisions from the top or considering that these can be improved further, or that there may be some flaws that need to be looked at critically, are the least considered ideas at the DEOs.

The nature of role that the key actors in the activity system can play is contingent upon the approval of the authorities and people in power. Ali et al. (2006) have noted that in most cases, the allocation of tasks at DEOs is not linked to the organizational needs; rather, it happens on the basis of personal preferences of the boss. An illustrative example can be seen in case of participation at the formal training courses. Since participation in these formal training courses entails entitlement to additional money for the attendees (in form of travel and daily allowance), it becomes very attractive for the employees. The study indicates that these capacity building programmes are generally seen as means to earn more money rather than working on the official object. There is no systematic mechanism for identifying the learning needs of the staff and nominations for these courses; therefore, it becomes another venue for the authority to exercise its powers (when it comes to selection or rejection).

One important dimension of power is its ability to shape ideologies, perceptions and norms (Lukes, 2005). Power influences and shapes in such a way that one accepts the existing ‘order of things’ as given, natural and unchangeable (Lukes, 2005). Said (1993) highlighted the role of discourse in constructing social reality while Gramsci (1999) elaborated on how discourse can be used to control others. Foucault (1980) stresses the

inextricable nexus of power, discourse and knowledge. ‘The constructed knowledge or social reality rendered by discourse justifies all the actions of the powerful and condemns those who do not comply with them’ (Siddiqui, 2014).

The discourse at DEOs and, particularly the specialized workplace vocabulary, is quite insightful in understanding the mediation of power. This shared specialized vocabulary shapes the social construction of the workplace knowledge/ learning, as asserted by Renzetti and Curran (2000). For instance, the word ‘*juggar*’ provides important insights as to how a particular task is bound to be approached when it becomes necessary to deal with it.

...sometimes, wrong data is provided to the boss rather than informing him that one needs more time to collect the required data from the field...just to keep him happy. (Ex-president Senior Staff Association)

PSOs in Pakistan are characterized by power and politics (Babur, 2013). Both power and politics permeate all spheres of activities in the organization. There are various powerbases and, consequently, different pressure groups, which include clerical staff, too. By and large, ‘power’ is considered as lawful, which means that the boundaries between power and authority are quite blurred. Pye and Pye (2009) have noted that in the Asian context, power is regarded as omnipotence – the ability to do everything.

Therefore, one of the most significant contributions of the study is to have developed deeper insights about the power dynamics and its interlinkages with OL in the public sector of Pakistan – for instance, that power is linked to corruption learning and its implementation in the context of Pakistan.

7.1.3 Addressing Knowledge Gap Three: Understanding the Dialectics between Context and Agency

By and large, the conceptualization of OL theory is a-contextual. In most of the literature where context is invoked, the context is conceptualized as a ‘container’ or as an ‘inert background’, which is quite problematic (exceptions mainly include the empirical work done by Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research, University of Helsinki). Thus, the available OL literature considers context either as non-intervening or as an external factor influencing the OL.

Addressing Knowledge Gap Three implies: The OL theory needs to be enriched through gaining a nuanced understanding of the dialectics between context and agency

To address this gap, the current study conceptualizes context as embedded and evolving. Context acts as both, the medium as well as the outcome of human activities, as Blackler (2009) has articulated: Activity is the context. This means that the dynamic interactions between and among subjects, object, tools, roles, rules and norms define the context. Thus, context from this perspective co-evolves with the activity. From an activity theory perspective, “the ‘minimal meaningful context’ for understanding human actions is the activity system, which includes the actor (subject) or actors (subgroups) whose agency is chosen as the point of view in the analysis and the acted upon (object) as well as the dynamic relations among both” (Barab, 2002, p. 533).

Given this understanding of the context (context as historical and social product as well as co-evolving with the activities), the present study contributes to the methodology of studying context and theorizing on the basis of the context. For example, the conceptualization of object as ‘power’ by the actors (education managers) has shifted the attention of DEOs more towards the ‘administrative’ aspects of the management practice. As a consequence (in terms of dialectics), the tools in use are those that promote/ facilitate the exercise of power for corruption.

7.2 Knowledge Contributions to the Activity Theory

The Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) was used as a conceptual framework for studying organizational learning in the public sector of education in Pakistan. CHAT provided a useful framework for exploring not only ‘how’ learning takes place but also ‘what is being learnt’. The over-emphasis of OL theory on positive learning outcomes, such as enhanced efficiency and more responsiveness to the environment, has rendered the question of what is being learnt, almost irrelevant. With the desired outcomes kept upfront, whatever did not contribute to the desired outcomes, was considered as noise and/ or as a hindering factor. Thus, ‘what is being learnt’ could not get appropriate empirical attention in the OL theory.

CHAT, as a conceptual and analytical framework, has enabled the researcher to make important knowledge contribution to the field (as discussed above). Moreover, an important tenant of the activity theory is that tools not only transform the ‘object’ (research study in this case); rather, they also get transformed. This means that how the ‘activity theory’ (tool) has been transformed in this study becomes an interesting question. In this connection, the present study also made important contributions to the Activity Theory, which are discussed in Sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2.

7.2.1 Resolution of Contradictions

The activity theorists highly acknowledge the value of contradictions and paradoxes for collective learning (e.g. Blackler et al., 1999). There has been a consistent assumption that contradictions between the ‘given’ and ‘perceived’ object will be resolved, resulting in development and progress (See Engestrom, 2000). The contradictions of the activity system may not necessarily get resolved for collective development. The possibility of stabilization of contradictions within the activity system (e.g. contradictions in relation to the object construction/ conception) has hardly been given much consideration. The current study, however, highlights that the presence of contradictions per se does not necessitate the coherence and resolution of those contradictions. The existing literature has been quite weak in articulating the possibilities of a context/ activity system which has high tolerance for contradictions. The contradictions, as the findings of the present study have revealed, could be left unresolved with an unarticulated consensus on part of the stakeholders. In case of the study of OL in the public sector in Pakistan, the contradictions in the object not only persisted, rather they were enhanced – for instance, the existing contradictions between the role of educational manager as being ‘education-focused’ versus focused merely on the ‘administration’ continue to remain unresolved.

In broader terms, the contradiction could be a ‘way of life’ in the context of hypocrisy, which has been a case in the present study. The consequences of resolving contradictions can also be otherwise. For example, in the present study, the motives of the local politicians and educational managers (their perceived object) have been converging and the system is moving further away from achieving the ‘stated organizational objectives’. In the context of high power difference, the differential power of the subjects may only allow ‘reinforcement’ of the contradictions or may result in expanding the ‘gaps’ only.

Within the discussion of resolution of contradictions, the possibility of the ‘given’ object as getting shrunk or narrowed (which has been the case in this study) seems to have been ignored in the OL literature. One probable reason of this ignorance is the strong association between resolution of contradictions and progress. The existing literature indicates that objects are transformed and expanded (see expansive learning). However, the present study indicates that over the years, the given ‘object’ has, at least, not expanded; the public policy and other official documents indicate that the conceptualization of official object, in essence, has become rather narrow over the years, with the emphasis shifting from the educational purpose to administrative role (see elaboration of this point in Chapter Three).

CHAT has generally been criticized for its lack of sufficient attention to the power issue within this theoretical framework. The present study, I believe, made contribution to the efficacy of the AT framework for power analysis by expanding the existing conceptualization of artefacts or tools as ‘a-political’ or ‘neutral’ to understanding the tools as ‘highly political’ in nature. Given the centrality of the artefacts in the discussion of AT, some important elaboration of the artefacts has been present in the literature. For example, Wartofsky (1979) categorized artefacts as primary (directly used in production), secondary (internal and external representations of primary artefacts), and tertiary artefacts (imaginary artefacts). While Engestrom (1990) has further elaborated the artifacts in terms of four different kinds (see Table 7.2), where the categories of artefacts were based on the functions/ processes they represent.

Table 7.2: Categories of Artefacts (Engestrom, 1990)

Artefact Category	Description (Function/ Process)
‘What’ Artefacts	Used to identify and describe objects
‘How’ Artefacts	Used to guide and direct processes and procedures on, within or between objects
‘Why’ Artefacts	Used to diagnose and explain the properties of objects
‘Where-to’ Artefacts	Used to envision the future or potential development of objects

Overall, the conceptualization and understanding of the artefacts have remained a-political, which has rendered the activity theory as not very appropriate framework for analysis of power. In the context of activity, power is both the medium for and the outcome of the

collective activity (Blackler and McDonald, 2000). The current study, I believe, contributed through highlighting the political nature of tools – i.e. either there should be an acknowledgement that all tools are of political nature (their usage is politically driven) or that there is a need for identifying a meta-category – ‘which artefact’ – as a category that explicitly deals with the guidelines or suggestions regarding the choice of tools in a particular situation. This is a meta-tool or category that mainly indicates which specific tool to be chosen at what particular time. For instance, while allocating resources to a school, the district education officer will use a different tool if that is being done on the instructions of some authority/ power figure. This new category adds a dimension that contributes to the understanding of how power mediates the everyday routines.

From a different entry point, the present study has made yet another contribution – i.e. the addition of ‘compliance’ to the existing ‘kinds of interactions’ (coordination, cooperation and communication) identified by Engestrom (2000). The present empirical work indicates that quite a significant volume of interactions cannot fit into Engestrom’s categories. In the hierarchical/ top-down structure, a larger part of the interactions is generated from the top, and mainly requires or inspires ‘compliance’ as an outcome.

7.2.2 Disuse of Tools

Given the strong association of the activity theory with positive changes and collective development, the tools, by and large, are improvised, improved and/ or enriched. The disuse of tools or their complete abandonment has not received considerable attention. For example, in case of the present study, the tools to observe teaching-learning processes in the classrooms have, by and large, been abandoned. Blackler et al.(1999) did mention the disuse of tools, but as organizational forgetfulness, rather than as organisational learning.

7.3 Some Other Contributions – e.g. to Research Methodology and Methods

At epistemological/ methodological level, the present study highlights the possibilities of combining two dominant perspectives in the literature of organizational learning: the functionalistic and interpretive perspectives.

From the functionalist perspective, individuals learn for the organization and knowledge (as an outcome of learning) is stored outside the individual as organizational routines, rules and procedures. The functionalist perspective is based on the assumption that

reality exists out there (Ortenblad, 2002). This means that organizational structures exist as independent of the actors' consciousness (Tierney, 1988). However, from the interpretive perspective, the reality is a social construction of the actors, and learning is a participation of organizational actors in the organizational activities (Ortenblad, 2002).

The incommensurability is based on the problematic dichotomies of individual and collective; and subjective and objective. The present study has indicated that the individual learning and collective learning are in a dialectical relation – one presupposes the presence of other. Similarly, the dichotomy of subjective and objective is problematic – all social investigations simultaneously involve uncovering objective realities and subjective interpretations. This means that the division of the so-called qualitative and quantitative methodologies is challengeable.

The present study claims some other contributions in the domain of research methods/tools. Some examples are provided in the following lines. The data generation workshops and use of a variety of tools for large scale data generation and in-depth (and multi-perspective) analysis for broader pattern seeking enriches the design of research and methodological choices. Moreover, the use of some interesting and innovative tools, such as FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) or FUS (Frequently Uttered Statements), to carry out organisational Discourse Analysis (and for the purpose of identifying the organisational norms) has been a value addition. Retrospectively, the decision to carry out an analysis of the organisational discourse, narratives, roles and images/ metaphors has been very rewarding – the relatively large scale insights and perspectives generated through the use of such methods and tools could not have been gained otherwise.

7.4 Limitations and Considerations for Future Research

The current study explored OL in the public sector using AT as an analytical tool that allowed generative data collection and the taking into account of multiple perspectives; however, there were certain limitations to this study. The study used a particular conceptual framework in a particular context; however, the framework certainly needs to be validated further through some further OL studies in some other public sectors.

The study is also limited in its review of literature, which was carried out broadly under the label of OL in the public sector. The stream of research under the label of innovation in public sector and also under 'The New Public Management' has remained, by

and large separated from OL studies. Further studies need to take advantage of these related streams of research.

The overall findings of the study are based on an in-depth case study of a specific district in Sindh. To enhance the degree of 'representativeness' and 'generalisability' of the case study, data generation workshops were conducted by inviting district educational managers from 10 other districts for pattern seeking. The interpretation of the data was done using insights from the historical analysis of the activity system. Thus, findings are validated with a significant degree of confidence. However, the selected case may still not be representative of the management practices in the public education sector, in general. Some more studies in this domain will help in generating further insights to validate findings for similar other contexts at a larger level.

The data of the study is based on the perceptions and experiences of educational managers (working on managing 'learning', as one of the most elusive concepts) who, by and large, are drawn from teachers in the public sector. The findings of the study may not be extrapolated to other public sector organizations, especially dealing with more 'concrete' objects such as public health. Therefore, similar studies need to be conducted in other kinds of public sector organizations. These new contexts would provide opportunities to refine the methodological approach adopted by this thesis and to assert its trustworthiness.

Data collection tools have been designed carefully, however, no video recording was done due to cultural constraints that might have allowed more nuanced interpretation of the 'data generated' during the study.

Gender differences were not taken into account for the interpretation of results. Other researchers in future may consider this dimension also.

The researcher has experiences of working hundreds of district education officers over the years in different provinces of the Pakistan, which has lent the researcher openness to the interpretations of the data. In addition to that, the researcher stayed mindful of any possible biases that may come in due to be a participant researcher, yet there might be some possibilities of unintended/ unnoticed biases. Further research may help in identification and redress of those biases, if any.

Given the limitations of this empirical work, further research work needs to be undertaken that may validate or challenge the findings and interpretations of this study.

The current study provides tools and concepts for studying OL in the public sector. I hope that the current study will provide future researchers a good basis for designing their OL

study and the study will be particularly useful in recommending effective tools for data collection and for the interpretation of the data.

7.5 Practical Implications of the Study

Given the dearth of OL literature related to the public sector (especially in developing countries' context), the present study has contributed towards developing a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon. In the following paragraphs, I, first, discuss the practical implications of the study at a more generic level, followed by a discussion of implications more specific to the case under study.

The present study indicates that 'what is being learned' by organization may not be limited and confined to positive view of learning i.e. learning associated with positive outcomes. Thus, while diagnosing challenges related to learning, as the study has indicated, the possibilities of negative learning cannot be ignored. Unless such 'learning(s)' are diagnosed, there is hardly any possibility of addressing such kind of learning challenges.

The findings of the study highlight/ underline other implications also e.g. for the design and implementation of intervention programmes. For instance, the present study indicates that the 'object' of the activity system is shared by a broader community (stakeholders), which also comprises of people from outside the boundaries of the formal organization. The participation/ role of these stakeholders shape and is shaped by the activity system. Thus, the perspectives of these stakeholders are important and need to be taken into account during all the various phases of intervention.

Another major implication for the design of intervention programmes is to understand the critical significance of developing/ enhancing 'collective infrastructure of learning' rather than almost an exclusive focus on individuals' skills development. This also means that creating context and structure for collective reflections on organizational issues, and developing and refining tools used to address those issues should be seen as a significant consideration while designing an intervention program. Taking the argument further, the findings highlight that the introduction of new tools/ technology, vocabulary, skills and rules may not be much useful until they are integrated with the activity system, which is rather a long term process. Thus, conceptualization of capacity building programs as a one-off activity may not work. Collective development is an on-going process and capacity building programmes need to be designed as a 'catalyst' to help in making progress in the desired direction.

The current empirical work, from the lens of studying 'practice', provides a helpful framework (both to the organization/s and individual/s concerned with the management practices of educational managers) to analyze and reflect upon the current practice. For example, questions for reflection could include: What is the overall purpose (object) of the organization and how are the various motives (or actions) of the actors aligned to this purpose? What kind of disturbances will get introduced into the system by shifting the reporting relationships? In what ways can new technology creates contradictions (potential for development) in the system, and how can these contradictions be resolved?

Now, I will discuss specific practical implications of the study. According to the empirical findings, the administrative aspects of the management (such as data collection) have become much more important for the management at all levels as compared to the processes associated with 'teaching and learning' – this has serious implications for the outcomes of the educational management in the province i.e. the provision of quality education in the public sector. For instance, the monitoring of the learning processes in schools has gradually been abandoned whereas the frequency of receiving/ dispatching administrative information has increased immensely. The education department should refocus their attention on educational issues rather than just attending to the resource issues, and that also without any reference to their educational implications. This means that the use of artefacts/ tools supporting the construction and realization of 'official object' needs to be enhanced and supported for more positive outcomes of the management activity system.

The findings of this study can be used by policy makers to develop appropriate policy provisions that could support/ gear management practice towards desired outcomes. For example, the findings of the study indicate that the recruitment/ postings and retention of the educational managers, by and large, is the function of 'sustained support' from politicians and other powerful players (such as teachers' union). The educational managers, therefore, feel quite insecure and at the mercy of the local politicians. To address these deep rooted issues related to the managers' vulnerability, the department should develop adequate policy and formal protocols for the hiring and retention of educational managers. In addition to that, educational managers' capacity also needs to be enhanced to engage with the local politicians and teachers' unions in such a way that they can see the advantages of positive application of power which currently, in most cases, is used to support/ encourage negative practices in the department.

The study indicates that the system of reward/ punishment is not aligned with the object of the activity system. The findings are quite consistent in this regard that there is no

link of performance to promotion. Overall, the network of rewards/ punishment is associated more with the ‘carrying out of orders’ (legal or illegal) given by the actors in power/ authority. This explains the prevalence of ‘compliance culture’ in the department. As the current study indicates, the ‘culture of compliance’ is one very important factor contributing to the increasing corruption in the department. The senior management, thus, needs to redesign the system of reward and punishment (aligning it to the object of the activity system) for desired outcomes.

The present study has pointed out that, in the context of the public sector, rules have lost their significance and their implementation is problematic due to their complexity and consequent misuse (for personal/ political gains). The rules have also lost their relevance to the immediate operational context. The rules, thus, need to be revised critically keeping in view the contextual needs and realities.

The reform efforts, undertaken by the DoE, need to give special attention to the ‘community’, which, as compared to other stakeholders, is more concerned about the educational outcomes of the district educational management. This group could be more empowered to make the enhance the effectiveness of the educational management in terms of improved students learning outcomes.

7.6 Concluding Statement

Against the paucity of empirical work in public sector (see Chapter 1, Section 1.2 and Chapter 2, Section 2.3), this study contributes to understanding public sector organization in Pakistan.

In particular, it established: The management of district education is more subject-centered (especially, due to the powerful subjects) rather than being object-oriented. The influence of the powerful groups and personal interests shapes the management activity in the district.

The contradictions in the activity system are the potential areas for the development of the system. The most important systemic tensions reside within the object and tools of the activity system. Nonetheless, the subjects have developed resilience for the contradictions and, thereby, contradictions remain unresolved in the activity system.

The current study has used Activity Theory as a conceptual and analytical framework to explore OL in the public sector, which is a significant departure from the existing approaches to studying OL in Pakistan. The present empirical work hopes to provide, in

certain ways, motivation and some guidelines for future organizational learning researchers in Pakistan, who wish to use context-oriented research approaches.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Data Generation Tools

Individual Interviews Guide- Phase I (Macro Level)

1. What does years of your experience of working in the public sector organisations suggest about PSO: What kind of organisations these are, and how they can be managed??
 - What is your personal philosophy in relation to public sector management?
 - (As an effective public sector leader/ manager), how does a competent officer addresses the challenges faced during public sector management?
2. What metaphor comes to your mind to capture the concept of public sector management?
3. In your opinion, what is the purpose of district education offices, and how successful they have been in achieving their purpose?
4. What does a public sector employee learn in the sector, and how?
5. In your opinion, what are the key/ common/ major characteristics of public sector organizations? How have these characteristics emerged?
6. How will you explain differences between and among public sector organizations?
7. What kind of changes, over the years, you have noticed in public sector organizations?
8. In 2020, what kind of public sector organizations we may have, and why?
 - What are major/ key influences and how these have affected the functioning of public sector organizations?

Individual Interviews Guide- Phase I (Meso Level)

Introductory Question:

In what capacity you have known District Education Department (DEDs) in Pakistan and since how long?

1. What does years of your experience of working in the District Education Department (DEDs) suggest about PSO: What kind of organisations these are, and how they can be managed?
[Probes:
 - What is your personal philosophy in relation to District Education Department (DEDs) management?
 - (As an effective public sector leader/ manager), how does a competent officer address the challenges faced during District Education Department (DEDs) management?]
2. What metaphor comes to your mind to capture the concept of District Education Department (DEDs) management?
3. In your opinion, what is the purpose of District Education Department (DEDs) and how successful they have been in achieving their purpose?
4. What does a District Education Department (DEDs) employee learn in the sector, and how?
5. In your opinion, what are the key/ common/ major characteristics of District Education Department (DEDs)? How have these characteristics emerged?
6. How will you explain differences between and among District Education Department (DEDs)?
7. What kind of changes, over the years, you have noticed in District Education Department (DEDs)? And how have these changes affected the management of education in the districts?
8. In 2020, what kind of District Education Department (DEDs) we may have, and why?
 - What are major/ key influences and how these have affected the functioning of public sector organizations?

Interview Guide for Individual Interviews and FGDs – Phase II

1. What is the main purpose(s) of DEOs and how do they carry out this purpose(s)?
[Probe: Asking questions about each of the purpose/ function mentioned by the participant and digging deeper about how it actually is performed in DEOs. The same strategy runs down for the following questions too.]
2. How the purpose (s) of DEOs has evolved over the years?
3. What are the key outcomes of DEOs and do these outcomes have changed over the years and in what ways?
4. What are the main challenges in carrying out the purpose of DEOs?
5. How these challenges have been developed over the years? What are the contextual reasons of these challenges?
6. Who influence the functioning of DEOs and in what ways?
7. How working at DEOs influence working/ learning /doing of its employees? What would be learnings of a new employee at DEOs?

Note: The interview guide was adopted for local politicians / senior leadership of teachers and clerks association

Data Generation Workshop (Agenda/ Detailed Plan) – Phase II

Agenda/ Plan for Engagement:

- Welcome and overview of the workshop – explaining the purpose of the workshop and thanking the participants for their joining it.
- Individual Task 1: What you like and dislike about your job? (Participants recorded their responses on a sheet)
- Follow-up group discussion 1

~ Snacks Break ~

- Individual Task 2: How management practice has changed over the last 10 years/ What has changed in the functioning of DEOs over the last 10 years?
- Follow-up group discussion 2
- Thanks and close of workshop

x- x- x- x- x- x - x- x- x- x

Appendix B

Summary of Managers' Images of Management

Respondent	Image	Description of image	Reflective/ Analytical Comments
DOE	Organogram	Improving development of education Provide missing basic facilities to students and schools Develop cooperative environment Listen school problems and resolve them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management is seen in terms of hierarchy (national culture) Focus on physical facilities remain upfront Management = problem solving
DOE	Organogram	Leader of the district education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management is seen in terms of hierarchy (national culture) At the top is the leader
ADO	Image of male	Send teachers to class room check the register run school properly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leader is a person, and that also male Role is quite narrowly conceptualized: checking, monitoring
ADO	Sketches of classrooms, blackboard, teacher	Improvement of schools with the help of subordinates To contact with parents of students To contact with political persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Image takes a broad view of management, where perceptions of object include classrooms and improvement of school. Political figures feature in
ADO (F)	Sketches of school building, classroom, and head mistress shown under stress with a thinking bubble 'minister is coming ..school should be clean and all teacher should be present'	To help the subordinates To improve their ability Work for the school/teacher/student Cooperative personality Work for all (institution and head teachers) Improve the quality of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Image takes a broad view of management, where perceptions of object include classrooms and improvement of school. Political figures feature in. School should function properly because minister/ political figure is coming – Power/ authority – not because parents are visiting
DDO	Sketches of classroom , board with English alphabets, teacher	To improve the system of something To control the system according to rules and regulations To manage the things in proper manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Image takes a broad view of management, where perceptions of object include classrooms Management is 'Control' through rules and regulations
DDO	Image of a manager (male) with schools	Discipline Best educational environment Academic competency Making things right by cooperation Improve the quality Check and Balance Follow up Asking about student's absenteeism Asking about information within 24 hours Asking about stopped salary of chowkidar (gatekeeper) and ordering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leader is a person, and that also male (though school also feature in) Some key words: 'check and balance', requiring info within 24 hours, 'ordering' – these are images associated by HT with the DOE Then there are others such as discipline, follow up, student absenteeism, etc.

Appendices

Respondent	Image	Description of image	Reflective/ Analytical Comments
		to release it immediately	
DEO	Sketch of a boy and kite	A young boy is flying a kite, he is looking at the sky	Didn't quite get the detail of it
DOE	Organogram	Inspection and management of school Supply literacy material in his district school To provide teacher development training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management is seen in terms of hierarchy (national culture) Inspection, supply of learning material and teacher training are mentioned
DOE	Hierarchy running down from DOE	To set the things in right place cooperation and coordination among all employees, working in an institution is must Everyone should know their job description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management is seen in terms of hierarchy (national culture) Job description, coordination and cooperation are other features mentioned
DDEO – F	A BIG man helping a small one	Coordination with subordinates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DOE image as either mature, experienced or more powerful/ authority figure gets highlighted where their role seems to be depicted as hand holding for less experienced/ less powerful school management Coordination is mentioned
DDEO	Sketches of a BIG manager showing a small subordinate & a colleague	Manager is a great power He cooperates and coordinates with the educational team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DOE image as more powerful/ authority figure gets highlighted where their role seems to be depicted as hand holding for less experienced/ less powerful school management Power discourse
DOE	Organogram	District Officer is a manager, officers, schools/institutions work under its management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management is seen in terms of hierarchy (national culture) DOE is seen as 'manager', where others work 'under' him/ her
DOE	A BIG manager with a small subordinate	Manager should be powerful He always looks after the schools and visits the schools He solves the difficulties and problems of schools, teachers, peons and chowkidars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DOE image as more powerful/ authority figure gets highlighted where their role seems to be depicted as hand holding for less experienced/ less powerful school management Power discourse Manager is a male Management is problem solving
DOE	Sketches of a manager sitting on revolving chair with a big table in front of him while two subordinates are also shown using a desk style	A manager first thinks something, then he or she works on those things/matters with the help of staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DOE image as more powerful/ authority figure It is depicted that thinking can only take place at the DEO level DEO is to do with offices – not schools (their main function as

Respondent	Image	Description of image	Reflective/ Analytical Comments
	table.		office work rather than educational work)
DOE	Sketches of a manager with a big table in front of him	Manager is hardworking and powerful person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEO is to do with offices – not schools (their main function as office work rather than educational work) • Power and authority feature in (through furniture/ seating arrangement)
DOE – Balochistan	Sketches of a manager sitting on revolving chair with a table in front of him	Manager is very powerful person He runs his office with the help of his subordinates His order is order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEO is to do with offices – not schools (their main function as office work rather than educational work) • Power and authority feature in (‘orders’)
ADO – F – Balochistan	A manager holding a meeting across a large table	Work in group for the betterment of the department A good manager is who, who always works with the help of his or her subordinates A best manager is who, who is a good leader	Again, manager’s role is depicted as holding meetings, chaired by them
DOE Academic and Training	Sketch of a manager sitting on chair with a large table in-front of him	The manager is a powerful person, whose one word is order and order means order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEO is to do with offices – not schools (their main function as office work rather than educational work) • Power and authority feature in (through furniture/ seating arrangement and ‘order’ discourse)
DDEO	Sketch of a manager sitting on chair with a table in-front of him while holding his head	Management means headache	Management depicted as painful process, not a desirable thing
DDEO	Organizational Chart	Look after all educational cases of schools	Management is seen in terms of hierarchy (national culture)
ADO	Hierarchy running down from DOE	Inspection of schools Supply of literacy materials to schools Management of school Coordination with civil society and education department Conducting primary and middle standard exams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management is seen in terms of hierarchy (national culture) • Functions highlighted: Inspection, supply of materials, management, coordination, exam conduction, etc.
DDO	Sketches of a manager sitting on revolving chair with a big table in front of him showing his nameplate on the table while two subordinates are also shown using smaller tables.	A perfect manager makes the work perfect and on time. All the tables are clear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEO is to do with offices – not schools (their main function as office work rather than educational work) • Power and authority feature in (through furniture/ seating arrangement and ‘order’)

Appendices

Respondent	Image	Description of image	Reflective/ Analytical Comments
			discourse)
ADO	Sketch of a manager sitting on chair	The manager manages education system Provide reading, writing and audio visual materials Noting down and resolving the problems of teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEO is to do with offices – not schools (their main function as office work rather than educational work) • Power and authority feature in (through furniture/ seating arrangement and ‘order’ discourse) • Management as problem solving
ADO	Sketch of a powerful BIG person	Organize the improvement of education in district Helping and guiding the teachers	Power and authority feature in
DOE - HQ	Management – breakdown into functions	To manage things properly To monitor and evaluate the assessment of institutions To provide sufficient budget to institutions To make the future planning as per need To make coordination between all officers/stakeholders	Management is seen as ‘functions’ e.g. Manage, monitor, evaluate, budget provision, future planning, coordination
ADOE	Sketch of a person with his both hands at his head	At present now manager is confused and disappointed person He does not know what should he do? He can work for the desired goal of education How should he face different issues when he is in fact powerless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management failure depicted • Manager is depicted as a powerless person • Discourse of ‘power’ – disempowered individual
DOE	Management – breakdown into functions	To put things in order is the better management It creates transformative leaders, who are inspiring and daring Fundamental function of a manager is to make planning, by which we can get our targets easily, by doing such type of management we may be able to be a changed person	Management is seen as ‘functions’ e.g. Transformative leadership, inspire, dare, planning as fundamental function
DOE	No sketch	To prepare applicable proposals To place right person/place in right place To assign tasks as per one’s capabilities To view and review the task completed and reflect upon To develop a person his appraisal/evaluation report The timely reporting and its follow up To give decisions with regard time period for long lasting and useful	Management is seen as ‘functions’ e.g. Proposal development, suitable appointments, review, appraisal/ evaluation, reporting, follow up, decision making

Appendices

Respondent	Image	Description of image	Reflective/ Analytical Comments
		results	
DOE	Management shown as a tree with branches as functions/ objectives	The management is a skill of; Organization Planning target achieving fixing responsibilities jointly supporter evaluating, monitoring and providing result oriented outcomes for producing/establishing civil society with good governance	Management is seen as ‘functions’ e.g. Organisation, Planning, monitoring, evaluating, result- orientation, governance
DOE	Management – breakdown into functions (mind map)	Management is somewhat a mechanism to arrange the things to make complete updated goal thorough skills, coordination, monitoring and evaluation planning and policy and effective supervision	Management is seen as ‘functions’
	Organizational Chart	No comments offered	Management as hierarchy
DDO	Tree version of organizational hierarchy showing EDO as roots.	There is a tree; the root of the tree is just like an EDO The stem shows a DOE The branches are ADOEs & teachers Flowers and fruits are like students	Management as hierarchy – however, in this particular case, EDO is not shown as someone at the top, but as roots of the tree
DEO	Sketch of a garden with a gardener	Teacher is just like a gardener, who watered the plant at right time and gets fruit	Not about DOE
DOE	Tree version of education department showing schools as roots and education department as trunk	If the leader cares the tree it will provide better fruits If he or she is careless about tree, the tree will be fruitless	Growth/ nature metaphor (tree) is used, where DOE as tree trunk is to show that all depends on it) – but that is to highlight the significance, not the real situation as such
DOE	Sketch of a car (department) with manager as a driver, gas tank as budget and road (target)	To drive an institution, every person should be placed in his proper place	Machine metaphor – DOE as car, manager as driver – proper positioning/ appropriate hiring is emphasized
DOE	Sketch of school building with a list of materials and a equation: head teacher = manager	In the above mentioned concept; Material, things, persons are very essential to run a school Manager is the leading person to fix its directions	Physical aspects (resource-dependence) of management gets highlighted
DOE	Sketch (picture) of a manager, which labelled as follows: Brain: curriculum, Eyes: monitoring, Hands: teachers, Wearing: students, Body: school,	Management is the name of a combined definitions, with above concepting names, describes its need and importance	Management as organs of human body/ system to highlight relative significance of different elements of education

Appendices

Respondent	Image	Description of image	Reflective/ Analytical Comments
DDO	Sketch of an umbrella, having DOE in between, revolved by terms like, ADOE, supervisor, society, superintendent, senior clerk, junior clerk, driver	A district office is like an umbrella; under which all educational officials of district work together they cooperate with each other as their assignments are linked to each other for effective working of district office, it is mandatory that all officials should work with cooperation and coordination	DOE is depicted as a central point in the umbrella – coordination and cooperation highlighted
DOE - F	Organizational Chart	Details of functions	DOEs as functional hierarchy
DOE	Organizational Chart	Management should be like gardening	DOEs as organisational hierarchy, but growth (gardening) metaphor is also used
	Management – breakdown into functions (mind map)	Proper person on proper place	Management as functions - Appropriate hiring/ appointment is highlighted
DOE	Management – breakdown into functions (mind map)	Thus best manager will obey his leader and conveys instruction of high ups to the subordinates. These advises will go on grass root through better management and manager.	Management as functions – Manager is viewed as postman who sends down orders from the higher authority so that these could go down to the grassroots level
DDOE	Concept map of a manager	The concept of management in my opinion should be according to the environment, easy to adopt and get fruitful results in the limited passage of time.	Adaptability and result-driven – these are expectations
F	Organizational Chart with EDO at the top	To address problems	DOEs as organisational hierarchy, with EDO at top – management depicted as problem solving
ADO	Organizational Chart starting with DCO	Better coordination through meetings	DOEs as organisational hierarchy, with DCO at top – management depicted as better coordination
	Simple sketch of management as functions and also showing a manager with a telephone on a small table	Can achieve good results	Management as functions – Manager is viewed as result-focused
	Teacher as a tree	The teacher who does not cooperate should be transferred so that other learn lesson from this.	Penalizing lack of obedience
ADO – F	Names of different levels of education hierarchy in separate boxes under the label ‘ Education Department’	The coordination among different actors is important for betterment of education.	DOEs as organisational hierarchy, with DCO at top – management depicted as better coordination

APPENDIX C

Summary of Stories Narrated by Field Educational Managers

S. No.	Brief Description	Key Actors	Key Issue	Resolution of Issue/ Conflict	Reflective Comments
1	Two of the stories were about corporal punishment and how the parents complain to the DEO and supervisors against a teacher meting out corporal punishment to a child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEOS • Head Teacher • Local Politicians • Parents 	A teacher gave corporal punishment (which is legally prohibited) to a student	The EDEO, with the help of local politician, finally resolves the issue helping parents to take back their complaint after the teacher apologizes	<p>The Role of local politician as authority figure gets highlighted</p> <p>Parents come across as concerned or influential</p>
2	The other story is about a principal visiting a class and finding out that the teacher is absent from the class, he takes action against him and as a result he faces consequences from his higher ups. The student unions also start protesting against him. He gets fired.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal • DEOS/ Senior Management • Teachers Union • Students Union 	Disciplinary action against an absentee teacher created troubles for the administrator	A meeting among the DEOs, teachers' association and students' union takes place and the issue is resolved	<p>The powerlessness of school leadership is highlighted against the powerfulness of the teacher – which in this case comes from the power of the union – teachers and students</p> <p>It is a story rooted in the discourse of power – the headteacher is so powerless that he cannot penalize wrong doing on part of the teacher. It is also a story of prevailing culture of nepotism.</p>
?	A DEO deals with an inefficient teacher, who is a relative of a politician. He got him transferred to another school and brought another efficient teacher to his place. The teacher apologizes and both are reinstated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEO • Head Teacher • Local Politicians • Parents 	DEO takes action against an inefficient teacher	Disciplinary action against an inefficient teacher is reverted back by mediation of a local politician	Story of power and powerlessness. It is also a story of prevailing corruption and nepotism. The authority of local politician is emphasized against the powerlessness of the DEO.
4	The story revolves around how a DEO, commissioner and deputy commissioner solved the issue of provision of fans to a school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioner • Deputy Commissioner • DEO • School Management 	Provision of fans to a school	Bureaucratic network was mobilized for provision of basic facility in the school	This story is reflective of the ground reality where provision of even basic facilities to the school becomes such a high profile activity, which requires mobilization of bureaucratic network (at senior level)
5	Two stories are about how the district office managers overcome the problems that the flood brought on to a school				Emergencies remain a concern of the district education department
6	The story revolved around	• Community	Cultural		Reflective of overall

Appendices

S. No.	Brief Description	Key Actors	Key Issue	Resolution of Issue/ Conflict	Reflective Comments
	the resistance around female education, which was resolved through ED-Links workshops	• School Management	resistance to female education		context
7	The story is about a corrupt contractor, who is a politician's relative, securing the tender of building a school and how he embezzled fund and made a building that fell down. The principal was still being forced to let him continue building the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal • EDO • Local Politician • Contractor 	Corruption in school building and pressure to approve the building as such	Head Teacher approached EDO who asserted his authority and the contractor was arrested	Politician's power and authority is emphasized. It is also a story of prevailing corruption and nepotism. However, this narrative is slightly different where the message of hope in the story is if the senior educational leadership (EDO in this case) asserts his positional authority (which in a way refers to the personal authority – i.e. authority of character
8	In another story, a school building is made at a place remote from the local populace. Animals of influential end up residing there and finally it falls down and two children get injured.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local influential • DEO • Project Director 	<p>Building school at a place remote away from school going population</p> <p>School building being used as a stable for animals of influential people</p>	The DEO and project directors finally decide to build a school at an appropriate place	Again, it is a story of prevailing corruption and nepotism. Power also features in – through the authority figure of politician. Hope is found if the relevant educational leaders take appropriate decisions and actions, and take relevant role.
9	A story is about IT lab provided to a school by Edlinks, and how the principal shut it down due to lack of IT trained teachers. The EDOE got perturbed and asked the lab to be opened and the existing teachers to be trained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDO • Head Teacher 	Closure and reopening of IT lab	EDO interest in the matter and arrangements for reopening of the lab	Depicts positive interest of the senior educational leadership (at the district level) – and the positive consequence of such interest. The underlined message is that if the EDOs take positive interest, situation can be positively transformed
10	In another story, a similar action is taken by the EDO, DCO, local nazim, community and EDO education works and service. But the local landlord first tries to confiscate the school for his stable; then, the teachers go on a strike. These issues were resolved through the help of the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCO • EDO • Department for Civil Works • Local Nazim • Local Landlord • Teachers 	Local landlord's desire to use school building as stable for animals		It is a typical story of corruption and negative exercise of authority on part of the landlord – another power figure in the story of educational management in general and district education management in particular. The story is also reflective of the general and prevailing lack of concern

Appendices

S. No.	Brief Description	Key Actors	Key Issue	Resolution of Issue/ Conflict	Reflective Comments
	DEO and the local imam.				for education on part of the local politicians/ landlords. Local 'imam' (a religious figure) also comes across as an influential figure – some hope for the narrator
11	In another story an international Ngo decided to build a school for girls in an impoverished community. The school was to impart, education plus vocational training, breakfast, computing skills, etc. The local landlord protested against this. The media, the populace, the NGOs, CBOs all joined hands and protested against this and finally the school was built.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INGO • CBOs • NGOs • Media • Local community 	Local landlord's resistance to female education	All joined hands to overcome the resistance by local landlord	<p>Again, a case where landlord wants the children (and, especially, girls) to not get education so that they can continue to rule over an uneducated lot who cannot question their unfair treatment and injustice.</p> <p>In this story, hope comes in form of media, local community, NGOs.</p>
12	A story is about how funds are allocated for a school's resources by an NGO	NGO	NGO's help in provision of resources to a local school		<p>NGO's positive role is highlighted for resource provision.</p> <p>The focus is on physical resource provision</p>
13	Another story defines how a short term project with an NGO led to a situation where a feeder school was opened for a brief while, but couldn't be sustained as the teachers' salaries were reallocated to the flood relief funds. The DEOs decided to collaborate with NGOs for long term projects only.	NGO	NGOs short term support to open a school which was not sustainable	The DEOs decided to collaborate with NGOs for long term projects only	The nature of decision making at the district level gets highlighted – NGOs' role and sustainability issue also reflected

Summary of Stories Narrated by the School Heads

S. No.	Brief Description	Key Actors	Key Issue	Resolution of Issue/ Conflict	Reflective Comments
1	The pictures depicted the story of an impoverished school where there was apathy and indiscipline. The selected pictures showed a head teacher who used to shout at and bully students, a teacher studying newspaper in the library all day long instead of teaching, the children who were unruly and couldn't even follow a proper queue. The participants narrated further in that when the relevant EDO visited the school and reprimanded the head teacher on his negligent attitude, he felt ashamed. He pledged to bring about a positive change in the school and mobilized his staff's support and the community's resources for doing so. By and by, the situation at the school improved, children began taking interest in studies, teachers started to take a serious interest in teaching and improving their practices. The students began to indulge into extracurricular activities like art work, depicted by a picture of illustrations by young children. The participants utilized the images of a group of individuals to depict teachers and students. The school was able to gather resources in the form of a library, depicted by a relevant picture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDO • Head Teacher • Teachers 	Teaching and learning environment of a school and how it gets better	Turnaround of school because of reprimand by the EDO	If EDO wishes, the situation of the school can get changed – this story depicts this. They were forced to write a happy ending, that is why ending is such, otherwise, the story portrays the usual situation of many schools in Sindh, where the intervention of the EDO is hardly for the purpose of betterment of schools.
2	The pictures depicted the story of an impoverished school community where people were poor and worked hard to no end. The selected pictures showed a head teacher who was determined to change the fate of the people of his area for the better. He rallied the support of the local influential people for resources and started running a small makeshift coaching centre. Through acquiring----'s training, he became even more enlightened and motivated. He involved the whole community and was able to build a computer lab and a library in the school. The group used the picture of a supposed politician and an EDO to depict that the corrupt politician wanted to promote nepotism and was putting pressure on the EDO to have the head teacher transferred in exchange of his own favourites, and he was able to have his way. The 2nd last image depicts that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDO • Head Teacher • Community 	Efforts of school improvement can result in the punitive actions against the Head Teacher under pressure of corrupt local politicians	The transfer of Head Teacher was cancelled under pressure of community .	<p>Local influential people feature in – as important stakeholders. Power discourse is an important discourse to understand the education/ school management in Sindh</p> <p>The intent, efforts and initiative of headteacher and its consequent impact is highlighted.</p> <p>Training imparted at a private university in Sindh is associated with enlightenment of the head teacher – contradictions</p>

S. No.	Brief Description	Key Actors	Key Issue	Resolution of Issue/ Conflict	Reflective Comments
	the people of the community rallied up in protest of the transfer and the head teacher was reappointed. The last image depicts the picture of a position holder student who went on to win accolades for the school in question, under the head teacher's guidance. A total of 12 images were used to build this story and the narration was very powerful				<p>generated within the system.</p> <p>Community support/ role/ influence feature in – community portrayed as ray of hope</p> <p>Local politician's role as influential, corrupt is highlighted</p> <p>Student outcomes highlighted – object stays upfront</p>
3	The pictures depicted the story of an impoverished girls' school, where the head teacher was motivated towards change. As a result of his training from, he was able to acquire the skills and expertise to bring improvement in the school. He began approaching the different stakeholders for crucial resources for his school and even wrote to EDO for this purpose. He was turned down initially and that made him really depressed. However, the EDO and other stakeholders finally gave in and he was able to get hold the resources needed to build a computer lab and playground, etc. Relevant images have been used for this purpose; meanwhile, other pictures depict that the officials' didn't appreciate his efforts that much. However, the head teacher is satisfied and the last image depicts upscale and improved school building. In total 17 images were used to build this story.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained and motivated Head Teacher • EDO 	The story is in the context of a reform project describing the lack of support from district educational management	<p>Persistence of head teacher helped to get support from relevant stakeholders.</p>	<p>Training imparted at a private university in Sindh is associated with enlightenment of the head teacher – contradictions generated within the system.</p> <p>The intent, efforts and initiative of headteacher and its consequent impact is highlighted.</p> <p>The focus is on physical resource provision</p> <p>Hope is if the headteacher takes their role seriously</p>
4	The pictures depicted the very recent and contemporary crisis of flood in Pakistan and how people in general and schools in particular got affected by it. The story was about how the affected teachers were given helped and how the education process kept going on despite the crisis. Majority of images depict the flood victims settled in schools in the government run makeshift camps. The people of the area started protesting eventually as their children's education was getting affected due to the makeshift settlement of the flood victims in schools. The EDO and head teachers and other officials conducted a long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headteacher • EDO • Community • Other officials 	Disruption and discontinuity of the educational process due to school being used as rehabilitation place for the flood victims	<p>Community raised voice because of which the headteacher EDO And other officials resolved the issue through shifting the flood victims to</p>	<p>Education is least of the government's priorities is also often reflected in the fact that school buildings are the first that get confiscated for the purpose of accommodating flood victims – other offices do not get so severely affected</p> <p>Hope is if community raises voice</p>

S. No.	Brief Description	Key Actors	Key Issue	Resolution of Issue/ Conflict	Reflective Comments
	meeting and finally settled the issue. The flood victims were re-settled in other camps and the school's educational processes reconvened. The last image depicts the jubilation of the students. In total 29 images were used to build this story, as relevant pictures of flood victims were readily available.			another place	
5	The story depicted the nature of relationship between the EDOs and head teachers. The story was about how a head teacher improved his practices due to ----- project training and began working on improvement measures. However, his concerned EDO wasn't too happy or appreciative of the processes. In the narrative, the participant used the terms aggressive, tyrannical and snobs for that EDO, who was a fictional character, and the pictures selected meant to depict bureaucrat and the power distance between the two. The head teacher is then shown to applying innovative and progressive strategies to his context such as prompting team work amidst teachers and students, considering them knowledgeable, the importance of extra-curricular activities and the students' increased involvement in them, making students learn, etc. Finally, the EDO is shown to be impressed as well as happy when he visits the school. The last image depicts both, the head teacher and the EDO, embracing each other, which means that the power distance has gotten removed. In total, 15 images were used to build this story.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headteacher • EDO 	The lack of support and antagonistic attitude of the EDO towards change efforts made by the headteachers	HT received training due to which his perceptions and skills were improved, He wanted to apply his learning but the EDO was not very supportive of it. The problem is solved through implementation of his strategies and improving school context.	<p>The new skills learnt through training reflect contradiction generated in the system</p> <p>The contradiction is resolved once the HT transforms the school</p> <p>EDO in this story gets convinced of the HT. In real situation, often, the HT does not get much opportunity to resist EDO, nor does the EDO get convinced because the school was transformed.</p>
6	The story depicted the nature of relationship among the EDO, head teacher and teacher and the community. The story and the supporting pictures meant to depict a particular day in a school when the EDO decided to pay a surprise visit to the school. He was annoyed to find out the head teacher absent from the school and intrigued to see the teachers carrying on teaching the classes in her absence. When asked for explanation, the teachers told the EDO that there was a funeral in the community and the head teacher went there in order to show her support for and empathy with the community affairs. The teachers elaborated that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDO, • Head teacher, • Teacher • Community 	Surprise visit on part of the EDO to find headteacher's absence	Routine/ smooth running of the school in the absence of the headteacher was insightful. The issue was finally resolved once the headteacher and EDO met at his	<p>Surprise (inspection) visits depict common culture – the overall understanding and assumption is that the whole system is corrupt and, therefore, visits are conceived as if to catch the criminals.</p> <p>Training has been highlighted as contradiction in the system – that has helped in transforming the situation of the</p>

S. No.	Brief Description	Key Actors	Key Issue	Resolution of Issue/ Conflict	Reflective Comments
	since they got trained from -----project, they were aware of their responsibilities and were executing them even in the absence of the head teacher. The EDO however didn't believe them and later called the head teacher along with the teachers to his office for explanation. The head teacher elaborated the reason for her absence and the teachers supported her; finally, the EDO accepted their explanation and apologized for misunderstanding them. In total, 9 images were used to build this story.			office	<p>school</p> <p>School was running smoothly in spite of the head teacher's absence was indicated as success of their learning</p> <p>What the teachers informed the EDO did not suffice; the explanation was called (a show of authority)</p> <p>Significance of relationship with the community is highlighted</p>
7	The story depicted the nature of relationship among the EDO, head teacher and teachers and students. The story and the supporting pictures meant to depict a particular day, 13th august, in a school when the EDO decided to pay a surprise visit to the school. He was annoyed to find out the children out of their classes and he reacted angrily towards the noise level. The head teacher and teachers were called for explanation, who justified the scenario by telling him that the students were making preparations for independence day next day – 14th august. They were cleaning the school and decorating it for the occasion with buntings. The EDO was pacified by their response and was invited the next day to see the celebrations. Images of children celebrating and having their face painted in the flag's colors have been used to show their jubilation. In total, 10 images were used to build this story.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDO • Head teacher • Teachers • Students 	EDO found on his surprise visit children out of classes and making a lot of noise, which was against a typical notion of school discipline	HT and teachers explained that they were actively involved in 14 th August reparations ; the EDO was also invited to attend these the next day – this is how he got convinced that it was not noise but activity	<p>Surprise (inspection) visits depict common culture – the overall understanding and assumption is that the whole system is corrupt and, therefore, visits are conceived as if to catch the criminals.</p> <p>The concept of the school/ classroom is 'life-less' places, where there should be pin-drop silence. This is a typical definition of discipline in these schools (and even at many private schools)</p> <p>Explanation was called (a show of authority)</p>
8	The story depicted the nature of relationship between the EDO and head teacher. The story and the supporting pictures meant to depict a particular day when a displeased DEO paid a surprise visit to the school upon hearing complaints about it. He expressed his displeasure and questioned the school's achievements. In response, the head teacher proudly displayed the students' art work, their computer lab, playground and home economics exhibits. This way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDO • head teacher 	Displeased DEO (because of being misled through complaints) pays surprise visit	The issue is resolved when the HT shows the evidence of student outcomes to the DEO	<p>Surprise (inspection) visits depict common culture – the overall understanding and assumption is that the whole system is corrupt and, therefore, visits are conceived as if to catch the criminals.</p> <p>Complaint culture is</p>

Appendices

S. No.	Brief Description	Key Actors	Key Issue	Resolution of Issue/ Conflict	Reflective Comments
	she was able to convince the EDO that the school was progressing and was making meaningful contributions to the students' learning. The EDO was convinced and admitted that he was misled initially. In total, 20 images were used to build this story.				<p>quite common – these are often heard by the higher ups because it gives them an opportunity to penalize and to exercise their authority (a satisfaction that they are doing their duty; and a feeling that they can exercise authority)</p> <p>The relationship between DEOs and schools is very clearly depicted</p>

APPENDIX D

Discourse Analysis – Head teachers & Teacher Trainers

FAQs/ FUS	Disourse Analysis	Emerging Themes
(Reported by the Head Teachers)		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We've done so much for our district; now we want our share in whatever goes out here. 2. Didn't have time for Inspection; quickly send transport and food. 3. Given us money for petrol 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus is more on rights (misplaced), less on responsibilities (even the perceived in most cases do not get fulfilled) 2. The main responsibility is ignored 3. Focus on getting money <p>The discourse is reflective of the overall culture of corruption and malpractices</p>	Corrupt Practices
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ghost teachers will not be spared. 2. Level of unfair means in schools must be diminished. 3. To check and balance 4. Bane on transfer 	<p>These highlight key challenges in the system often faced by honest, committed individuals – these include, for instance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the issue of 'ghost' teachers or 'teachers-on-visa system' 2. Use of unfair means to support wrong actions or to get undue favors 3. Emphasis on check-and-balance as opposed to the culture of corruption 4. The statement reflects a criticism of frequent transfers: Often, transfer of committed senior official before they are able to bring any positive change comes as a loss to system. Then, sincere/ committed teachers also often get transferred as penalty for their right actions or they get replaced by influential person's favorites so that their corrupt practices could continue without any hindrance 	About/ Against Corruption
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Don't do this; don't do that. 2. Obey orders. 3. I didn't listen 4. Urgently. 5. I have noticed. 6. No discuss. 7. I'm transferring the teacher 8. I will come and check your course and HT. 9. Visited sudden 10. Obey and improve 11. I am busy in meeting 12. Take what u have given 13. What is your progress 14. Inform immediately 15. We know you work but at some places we're helpless 	<p>The frequently uttered statements are quite insightful and very reflective of the overall culture of POWER and AUTHORITY prevalent in the public sector in general and education sector and district education management system in particular. In effect, much of it reflects the broader national culture also.</p> <p>For instance: It is strongly a culture that requires 'obedience' by the superiors</p> <p>Then, one way to exert authority is to project 'urgency' – all the information is urgently required. 'Inform immediately' reflects similar</p> <p>Moreover, transfer is used as an exercise of authority – to penalize the honest and committed (or someone who would not comply in carrying out the corrupt practices)</p> <p>'Sudden visits' are also used as exercise of power and authority. Likewise, 'I will come and check your course and HT' reflects similar exercise of power/ authority.</p>	Authority/ Power Discourse

FAQs/ FUS	Disourse Analysis	Emerging Themes
	<p>The whole discourse is reflective of power/ authority and power-distance relationships. This is indicative of the conceptualization of the Object.</p> <p>‘we are helpless’ is also a discourse related to power or powerlessness</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They stress on quality teaching Improve the standards of your school. 2. It is imperative to bring quality education in schools. 3. Improve school’s progress. 		About Quality of Education
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers must realize their responsibilities 2. They want us to ensure teachers regularity. 3. Ensuring staff presence 4. They ask us to follow the timetable, schedule, etc. They tell us to come on time. 5. While visiting us, they point out issues and help us solve them. 6. They want to check all the record during inspection 7. They want information on time/ 8. Completion of course 9. Management of school 10. They want us to pay attention to cleanliness 11. Stress on teaching/ Inquire about teaching 12. They spend more time during visit 13. They check bills for schools. 14. They tell students for uniform 15. Provide complete information on time 16. To present SMC to DOE 17. To meet DOE to discuss the transfer of good teachers. 18. Children should not fail. 19. Let the children use computers. 20. Plant trees. 21. Do go for training programs and the like. 22. Be polite to the staff members. 23. New teachers will be appointed 24. Middle exam program 25. Gaming competitions 26. Social and other programs 27. Inspection visit 28. To maintain office needs 	<p>Teacher regularity Follow timetable Highlight issues Check record Receive information on time Check school bills, student uniform, etc. There are very rare statement that relate to teaching learning, pedagogy, student outcomes, student participation, engagement or classrooms – it is about everything else, and mostly the surface level dimensions – around learning, not bout learning (baring a few rare comments)</p>	About their Role/ Object (official)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Such-and-such school is better than this one. 		Positive

FAQs/ FUS	Disourse Analysis	Emerging Themes
2. I recommended such-and-such teacher to the Minister. 3. Your teachers are very regular. 4. Educational standards are better. 5. They recommend some teachers 6. School is working smoothly 7. Your problems are written in my dairy		Feedback
1. EOE's create problems. 2. You don't provide information on time. 3. Why is there no teacher? 4. Be in time for the meeting. 5. Why did you not maintain the record? 6. Orders were incorrect 7. I didn't write their pay checks 8. They think I am a rude teacher.		Negative Feedback/ Role
FAQs/ FUS	Disourse Analysis	Emerging Themes
(Reported by the Master Trainers)		
1. Always looking for new training 2. They're not sincere in the growth of education 3. They do not visit schools 4. They do not coordinate about education but they disturb the school. The teachers who are sincere, they transfer them 5. What did you bring for us? 6. How much did you earn? 7. YOU just remain on training 8. Take some care of us too 9. By the way you're very clever in teaching. These trainings will do nothing	<p>These comments reflect the prevailing corrupt practices at the district management level. For instance, it is indicated that the DOE is not generally concerned about/ for education, but rather their presence creates more hindrance and barriers for those who are working for the betterment of education and students. One example quoted is that of 'transferring' good teachers. Other examples used in the above discourse analysis include, for instance, sudden/ surprise visits for the purpose of checking, not helping or supporting the educational cause.</p> <p>Similarly, it is evident that they are well aware of the lucrative nature of project related trainings (where they receive TA/DA, which is in addition to their salary), and they seem unhappy with the headteachers who get more opportunities for training. In such context, favoritism and nepotism are in practice so that they can send their relatives or favorites for training. 'Take care of us too' is an expression truly indicative of their corrupt interests – e.g. in getting a share in what they get as a training allowance.</p>	Corrupt Practices
1. Authoritative 2. You take double salary 3. Where is influential person of your village? 4. Some teachers do not go to school and have support of politicians	<p>These statements capture the overall culture/ discourse of Power and Authority. For instance, some headteachers have used the term 'Authoritative' to refer to the district education managers</p> <p>The statement regarding teacher absenteeism because</p>	Authority/ Power Discourse

FAQs/ FUS	Discourse Analysis	Emerging Themes
5. I select you for TDP 6. DO as I want 7. Complete your course in time 8. I will take surprise visit to your school 9. I will transfer you 10. How is your school running? 11. I will take action against you 12. Order to apply these methods and techniques in the school	of politicians' support again refers to the overall discourse of power and corruption 'Do as I want', 'Order to apply' – is a typical authority statement 'Surprise visits', 'transfer', 'take action against you' – all are rooted in the prevailing power discourse and authority culture. This discourse depicts that the inspection visits are not about school improvement or students' outcomes, but about exercise of power and authority and that also for unfair reasons. A very narrow conception of Object.	
1. Need to bring real change 2. Schedule your further planning and development for education 3. Improve quality of education 4. Give full response to education 5. We have spent on you; now you teach	The statements indicate that there are district education managers whose discourse reflects focus and emphasis on quality education – it is not evident as yet whether the focus is at the level of rhetoric or there is genuine interest and concern, and that this is part of their management practice. Sometimes, the respondents, being part of the overall culture of corruption, may just utter these statements, which may not be based on the reality on ground.	About Quality of Education
1. To improve teachers skills 2. Work as trainers but also in schools 3. You should encourage students 4. When is your (project name) training? 5. Are you using training material in your school? 6. You also encourage other teachers to teach? 7. Do you get to school daily? 8. How is school? 9. How is discipline? 10. How is teachers' attendance? 11. Do teachers com on time? 12. Help the CPs 13. Caters to school's needs 14. Brings change in management 15. Conveys messages from higher authorities 16. Responsible for district level education 17. Do you come for visit? 18. Keep motivating science teachers. 19. Try your best to teach with new skills	A quick discourse analysis suggest that the focus of the statements dominantly remain on issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training • Regularity, teacher attendance • Punctuality Conveying messages from higher authorities is also part of this discourse. There are, however, some statements that may be seen as indicative of relatively broader conception of object as compared to the FAQS quoted by the head teachers e.g. encourage students, apply learning from training, help other teachers, motivate science teachers, use new teaching skill, cooperate with parents, give benefit to students, etc. However, these statements come from 2-3 respondents, not all, so these may be reflective of the situation in their districts of work.	About their Role/ Object (official)

FAQs/ FUS	Disourse Analysis	Emerging Themes
20. We're ready to give you full support 21. Be punctual and regular 22. Please tell me what is the performance of our teachers after learning 23. You must do work hard 24. Transfer knowledge of training to children 25. Cooperative with parents 26. Do your duties honestly 27. Be polite with children 28. Be punctual 29. Prepare schedule for training in district 30. They ensure us to implement new methods of teaching 31. Teach well 32. Help other teachers 33. Give benefit to students 34. They support us and encourage us in any program		
1. Your training is fruitful 2. All these things are difficult 3. Other teachers praise you a lot 4. You're an asset of our district 5. You're a very talented teacher 6. You impress me 7. Good 8. Very good 9. Heard your name a lot 10. May Allah you succeed 11. Is there anything I can do for you? 12. Please continue this practice 13. In past why you didn't do this. These are good things. In future we should manage it 14. Appreciation at stage 15. You have a good chance to improve your ability 16. You are hard working 17. You keep it up 18. God has given you honor 19. You are treasure of our society 20. Our department needs person like you		Positive Feedback

FAQs/ FUS	Discourse Analysis	Emerging Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21. You're selected teacher 22. Appreciative 23. Encouragement 24. Supports in official matters 25. Preferences in training 26. Respect efficient teachers 27. Teachers for training 28. They say that you are most responsible 29. Give chances 30. Sometimes appreciate the environment of class 31. Appreciate the ability of work 32. Students take interest 33. You have a loud voice 34. Given letter of appreciation 35. You are doing well 36. Appreciate us 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You always remain on training 2. Teachers are irregular 3. Teachers are not punctual 4. To improve teachers skills 5. Work as trainers but also in schools 6. You're very stubborn 7. Why do you always teach in girls' school? 8. Are you the only person in district that your name appears in every list? 9. Your students are dull in maths 10. Work hard to achieve aim and goal 11. Work is not satisfactory 12. Cleanliness is not present 13. Attendance is very short 	<p>The discourse analysis indicate the focus and locus of attention for feedback:</p> <p>Regularity, punctuality, frequency of training, cleanliness. Only one comment is about student progress or lack of it 'your students are dull in Maths'</p>	<p>Negative Feedback/ Role</p>

APPENDIX E

Analysis of Individual Interviews at Macro Level

Note: The notes below are summarized versions of interviewees' responses (these are not exact sentences)

Interview #	Nature of PSOs? Common aspects? Changes historically?	Learning of PS employee, how?	Purpose & Success of DEOs?	Reflections/ Analytical Memos
Senior Education Specialist, INGO (National level)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context is a mix of politics, education and economics Feudalism in Sindh lack of accountability is a major factor Civil service rules and regulations Economic activity has major influence on people grooming and thinking Incompetent officers behave rudely to their employees to hide incompetence Sindh is difficult province. It is very difficult to implement anything in Sindh. There are huge networks of corruption in the province. Some of these networks cannot be recognized even as they are known 'incentive systems' There are committed and good individuals in the sector and if you can pick those individuals then you can work with the department easily 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All implementation is at district level but they lack resources and capacity to implement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of accountability is a major issue in education sector Isolated individuals are remaining hope in the system. Networks of corruption are well-established (money drives) Feudalism represents exercise of power Generic rules for all District management lacks capacity (important point)
Very Senior Govt. Official from Education sector (Provincial)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political intervention is mainly through transfer/ posting – use bureaucracy as tools both for allies and enemies They do not want to listen 'NO' Recovery is also main function of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If doing wrong task, why not do two more, and why not for money? Mindset: Will earn after learning or will learn and then earn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re success: Even 'masi' (maid) is not willing to send her kids to public schools. This reflects total failure of management Re Purpose: HR management; education improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political intervention reflects another dimension of exercise of power Strong submissive culture throughout PS and therefore in education is predominant

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Interview #	Nature of PSOs? Common aspects? Changes historically?	Learning of PS employee, how?	Purpose & Success of DEOs?	Reflections/ Analytical Memos
level/Sindh)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bureaucracy ...encroachmentworkers vs govt. policy Within organization, if you are not strong, your peon can refuse to accept your order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only aware person will fear law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enacted purpose is to serve who has appointed them - as <i>malik</i> (owner) will say, the same will be done 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Power can be exercised at the level of peon (where do they drive authority from?) Power is exercised through political recruitments of managers, teachers, lower staff and others in the educational hierarchy The culture of corruption is so strong that it is relatively easier for someone to get tempted to become corrupt
Govt. Official from Education sector (decade longer civil service), (Provincial level/Sindh)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation: no organizational effort to understand how people work, what motivates them, and then improve it systematically Person in position is important – a lot depends on him Boss cannot change rules but certainly can affect motivation of the employees Inherently motivated people stay motivated even after setback. Some civil servant works outside their job domains System is lethargic and accountability is missing. The responsibility of applicant to furnish whole requirements System : require more input than it is saving Layer: Section officer, Deputy Sec., Add. Sec, Special Sec, Sec (instead of 4 now 5 layers in secretariat). Everyone needs to pass 5 layers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning lethargy: hiring/firing rules, no performance measures, blind spots (you are safe), zero based budgeting (you prove your reason of existence ...you suppose all organization have zero budget) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> keeping the system running Why to become DEO: society wide trend of power and controlyou only can seek rent...when you have power ...rules are not equally applicable to all members of society Society has lost trust in Govt. Society is seeking its own solutions for crucial aspects such as ambulance service too [public trust in the government indicator] All district are almost same, differences are due to two reasons: a) leadership, b) history/ memory of the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise of power through position Power is bought with money to get more money Rules are of such nature, that some deviations are possible – however, the common practice seems to be to use them for wrong reasons Motivation for work/ positive efforts is individually driven; it has nothing to do with the system Lethargic nature of the system has emerged as a frequent mention Lack of accountability resurfaces Negative OL – learning lethargy System is not performance driven Those who spend budget legally get into hot water – they don't spend
Public Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragmentation or lack of linkages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Table – chair office is 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragmentation in the system gets

Appendices

Interview #	Nature of PSOs? Common aspects? Changes historically?	Learning of PS employee, how?	Purpose & Success of DEOs?	Reflections/ Analytical Memos
employee – senior/ experienced (scientific researcher), (Federal level)	<p>between ministries working in related areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability/audit need to be stronger; • Continuity of professional head (not a general head) • Develop a chain of institutions 	<p>standard expectation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee's mind set: there is tension between organization and its clients Relationship is based on fear; strong tendency to avail official privileges (some cleric to carry/ handle file); 'sarkar ko lootna' (to rob the govt.) 		<p>highlighted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability issue resurfaces • Generic rules/ leadership quoted as problem • Govt. job is seen as lucrative – focus remains on getting benefits rather than serving the clientele
Senior Education Specialist, INGO (Provincial level/ Balochistan)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What one can learn: if committed, can transform schools. When other districts are same, then what is your problem, a total context of negative thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System is not functioning • All management staff is supervisory but no one asks/ supports teachers (HM, LC, DO, Dir.) • There is no accountability of teachers – it is the sweet will of the teachers whether teaches or not • Secretary education always complains about Dist. Management • Biggest issue is the interference of public representatives • A lot depends on head of the institution/ organization • Accountability is always missing, and there is no ownership • A general disheartened-ness that nothing can happen reduces the possibilities of positive snowballing • Rigid thinking, same excuses of not working • Motivated people have got retired • Seniority –cum – competency: competency is almost ignored • Motivation: There is a lot of attraction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of accountability and system lethargy resurfaces • Power as exercise of political power • Issue of ownership is highlighted – there seems no owner of the public education system (with the existing conflict between bureaucracy and political system), especially, with the loss of trust (and hope also) in the public sector management/ system • Consequently, 'nothing can happen here' is a pre-dominant mindset • Competence is not rewarded • DEOs' object is to manage education/ schools – the government officers do not realize their role in teaching and learning – this is limited conception of their roles.

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Interview #	Nature of PSOs? Common aspects? Changes historically?	Learning of PS employee, how?	Purpose & Success of DEOs?	Reflections/ Analytical Memos
			in the word of ‘officer’. Teaching job is not easy. In officer-ship, you have lot of space and authority	
Senior Govt. Official from Education sector (Provincial level/ Sindh)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quantum of public sector is what fascinates. The downside that you are holding such big things <p>Governance Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures are not simplified; there are a lot of hindrances Those who work, remain under pressure, as you are the performer, they add more work People who will talk about rules or show resistance will be under pressure You think about your work only: ‘no this is not my job’ 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher were made a manager without specialized knowledge of management Across the sector fragmentation contributes to failure of many policies. Working in silos. Within the department also, fragmentation is vivid. There are no tasks for the whole organization - tasks are designed for individuals, organizations are not evaluated as organizations Overall there is deterioration: Recruitment was a major factor Weak governance suits the politicians Turn-over at higher levels is very high. There is no sense and engagement with performance (if secretary is transferred so frequently who else could be blamed) Three key aspects need attention: Task orientation, accountability, reward and punishment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures are deliberately kept as complex – as another way of exercising power The system of reward and punishment is reflective of organisational processes, outcomes and performance: a) An diligent worker gets penalized through getting more work and pressure (their work never ends); Honest/ policy-driven people get the pressure as the collective action creates pressure for those who want to follow policies or work through proper channel . And as discussed earlier, performance does not get rewarded Managers lack capacity for management Fragmentation of the system (PS in general and DEOs in particular) is highlighted again Organisation is not viewed as a system of collectives, but as ‘individuals’ Organisational performance = deterioration over a period of time (but the speed has increased now) Lack of continuity of the senior leadership has resulted in weak governance, but weaker governance is what the politicians want.

Appendices

Interview #	Nature of PSOs? Common aspects? Changes historically?	Learning of PS employee, how?	Purpose & Success of DEOs?	Reflections/ Analytical Memos
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power is exercised through keeping the governance weak (i.e. transfer and promotions are tools for exercising power) • Strong suggestion for positive performance include: PS/ DOE as task-focused/ task-driven or performance based reward system, accountability and reward/ punishment
Senior Research & M&E Expert, worked in education sector for nearly 2 decades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In developing countries, the difference between policy and policy in practice is larger than in the developed countries. • Public mindset: lethargy, incompetence also contribute to mindset, you also need to delay the things ...lack of competence generates many attitude • Power is also an important aspect. Bureaucracy has special mind set; submission to authority is the part of bureaucratic mind set. This has also reverse effect ..lower will have to submit • Even if a bureaucrat does not have competence for some area, nothing will stop him/her in exercising authority • How can you talk directly to minister – you cannot talk ...that is a bureaucratic attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR management, leave rules, • How to negotiate with power holders be they journalists • It also means that person has also learned corruption • Workaholics are present in all departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of system • Lack of management / administration • Delay is because they do not know what to do; system hangs in most cases as they do not have clear understanding of the steps • Rules are complicated and officials do not read or understand the rules. Rules are not followed by SOPs • Issues are also maintenance and capacity • Rules are the same for health, education and mining - as they think that procurement are same for all. One monitoring officer for ADP schemes for all social sector • Chaos can be done away by using technology. The organization avoiding technology has little chances of improving the situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOE as organisation lacks ‘system’ – meaning they do not fit the definition of ‘organisation’? • Lack of capacity contributes to system lethargy • Inaccessibility (being difficult/ less user friendly/ too generic to be applied to specific cases) of rules is quoted as major reason for lack of system/ policy implementation or procedure. RULES have emerged as a major theme here. • Use of technology has been indicated as an important measure of organisational efficiency and, therefore, performance, which these DEOs lack.
Strategic Planning Director,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial matters are also mostly the same for all public sector organizations (procurement rules, 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The system has improved over the years as accountability level has increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Accountability has increased’ is not consistent with existing perspectives/ findings (this could

Appendices

Interview #	Nature of PSOs? Common aspects? Changes historically?	Learning of PS employee, how?	Purpose & Success of DEOs?	Reflections/ Analytical Memos
INGOs, Extensive experience of donor-educational projects	audit), PEPPRA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others are hierarchy, hiring processes, procurements • Rules are not supported with SOPs such as how many days you can keep file and, therefore, a lot subjectivity comes in • Job security is the most demotivating factor towards performance. This is a paradox 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road map of education makes the basis of district ranking (six indicators) • Recent moves to link performance with promotion - for 18 position; 54 officer cases will be discussed. • Major influences: political, professional association and inflation also. You need another job at least if not malpractice. This is also contributing to low performance. Typists are also typing outside materials in offices • In Punjab, recruitment is almost out of political influence • Future: DED will be under community, and will be professional organizations 	be the experience in Punjab) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power is exercised by politicians and professional associations/ unions (what kind of power do they have?) • Economic reasons drive system • Political influence on recruitment in Sindh • Hope for DEOs seems to reside in community taking more ownership • It is implied that DEOs currently are not professional organisations (what kind of organisations are they and what should we call them if they are not professional organisations?)
Senior INGO educational representative, national level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public sector is much politicized in developing countries. This can be managed through rules, regulations • Government get persuaded by the money 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image/ what comes to my mind when I think of education: a) Possibilities and b) corruption, of course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is so much corruption that education that people think of education and corruption simultaneously • Spending money is the main attention for bureaucracy, which may explain inattention to core educational matters • PS is politicized – political influence has played a negative role/ Political power did not get exercised for public good • The hope seems to be in implementation of Rules and Regulations (Organisational performance could be improved if Rules can be improved, and implemented – which means made more accessible, and

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Interview #	Nature of PSOs? Common aspects? Changes historically?	Learning of PS employee, how?	Purpose & Success of DEOs?	Reflections/ Analytical Memos
				implementable)
Section Officer, Education (Provincial level/ Sindh)		<p>Learning over the years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [supervisor] schools, kinds of teachers, role of community, interventions , how funding is being spent. • Attitudinal: develop alignment with the context, the extent of control that can be exercised, and making sense of other influences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motive for becoming DOE: the desire to control others • During 1994, the desire for becoming manager was not so strong. Now everyone wants to become supervisor/ ADO • There is now a pact between thief and security guard – supervisor and absent teachers have now an arrangement / agreement • Regular inspection of teaching-learning processes is no more in practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What individuals in the PS learn – how to spend funding; how to remain aligned to the overall system, how to exercise power and authority/ control, understanding the overall context of power and corruption – these are important learnings • Inspection used to be an important dimension of district education management – as practically connecting DEOs to the schools through school visits (despite their limited focus and conception) – this means that the stated official object has further contracted
Educational Assessment Consultant, with government (Provincial level/ Sindh)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politicization has ruined the system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handling tasks, sensitivity of the tasks, how corruption works in the system • No rationalized work load; several tasks are given without training and resources (such as ASC, data collection, relief work) - He is bound to find and work out short cuts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractive posts: either do not have to work or money generating position • Corruption is spread like virus • 1988 ...teachers recruitment issue aggregated • Public teachers' sons/ daughters are no more in public schools , therefore, internal pressure to improve/ reform has reduced • Radical steps would be needed to improve the system such as either close the private or public schools • No rationalized work load; several tasks are given without training and resources (such as ASC), data collection, relief work - He is bound to find and work out short cuts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative exercise of political power is identified as major cause of system ruin/ failure • What is learnt: corruption • Lack of competence/ capacity comes across as issue for lethargy in the system • Corruption identified as viral (historically since 80's) • Example of system failure – even lowest strata of the society do not send their children to public schools (though they are more affordable than the private sector and often financial incentives are also given to increase enrolment)

SUMMARY

The notion of Organizational Learning (OL) has been present in the management literature for decades. However, it has gained prominence during recent years, which indicates the growing importance of knowledge and learning in relation to organizations. It also seems, therefore, that the interest in the discipline is ‘unlikely to be diminished’.

Despite the fact that OL has been a key focus in organizational studies and management literature for many decades, however, the theory has not developed fully. This gap becomes even more evident in case of organizational learning in the public sector. Specifically, the following knowledge gaps are evident and need to be addressed:

1. *The OL theory needs to be enriched through a nuanced understanding of OL processes.*
2. *The OL theory needs to be enriched through an enhanced understanding of how power mediates the processes of learning.*
3. *The OL theory needs to be enriched through gaining a nuanced understanding of the dialectics between context and agency.*

The identified knowledge gaps, thus, indicate the need for more empirical work so as to explicitly acknowledge the heterogeneous reality of organizational life through more robust theory and evidence derived directly from the public sector. The gaps also highlight the need for more nuanced understanding of OL processes in addition to the existing over-emphasis on learning outcomes (addressing Knowledge Gap One) – for instance, the dialectics between context and agency (addressing Knowledge Gap Three) and how power mediates the processes of learning need to be studied (addressing Knowledge Gap Two). Hence, the present study aims to answer the following main question:

How do the dialectical relationships between individuals and collectives and between structures and agency constitute organizational learning in public sector organizations in Pakistan?

The specific subsidiary questions that help in responding to the main question are:

1. How has management practice evolved in the public sector of Pakistan? What is the cultural-historical context of public sector management in Pakistan, and how has it influenced the management practice in the public sector of education?

2. How has the education management practice evolved and been enacted in a selected district of Sindh?
3. Does the management practice in one district have similar pattern/ resonance in other districts in the province (Sindh), too?
4. What are the insights for developing the OL theory, and what are the implications for improving management practice in similar contexts?

In order to respond to the research questions, the Cultural-Historical Theory of Activity, generally referred to as the ‘Activity Theory (AT)’, is used as a conceptual tool, which has its roots in the work of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) and his colleagues, A. R. Luria (1902–77) and A. N. Leont'ev (1903-1979). The present study uses Engeström’s model of AT (1987) as a theoretical and analytical lens. The model comprises of subject (an individual or group), object, tools, community, rules and division of labor. The ‘subject’ (actor) refers to individual or individuals whose agency is selected as the analytical point of view. The ‘object’ here refers to what people work towards. ‘Tools’ or ‘artifacts’ refer to the conceptual as well as physical tools that the subject uses in pursuing his/ her object.–The ‘community’ in the activity system consists of individuals/ groups who share the same object. ‘Rules’ refer to implicit and explicit norms and conventions that govern the relationship between the subjects and their community, whereas, ‘division of labor’ refers to the vertical and horizontal division of roles and responsibilities of the subject and community.

AT, as developed by Engeström (1987), has been employed for organizational analysis by various researchers and, in case of the current study also, the choice of AT as framework is made because of various specific methodological and analytical advantages. The *first* advantage is the conception of activity system as a ‘unit of analysis’, which includes as minimum, object, subject, mediating artifacts, rules, community and division of labor. *Second*, AT ensures the inclusion of context and, therefore, is oriented towards understanding practices, their objects, mediating artifacts and social organizations. *Third*, the methodological framework inspired by AT is both, systematic (good at creating hard facts) and inherently generative and multi-voiced. *Fourth*, the conceptual lens is analytical in capturing the dialectics between individual and organization, between action and thought, between production (transformation) and reproduction (continuity); and it acknowledges the centrality of mediation processes through tools, norms, rules and roles (division of labor), which is helpful in capturing the complexity of the OL phenomenon.

The research is conducted in a number of successive phases, each corresponding to a specific research question (RQ) – these are:

1. Phase I: A Cultural-Historical Analysis of the activity system (responding to RQ1)
2. Phase II: In-depth analysis of the case of OL in the activity system – Case Study (responding to RQ2)

3. Phase III: Pattern seeking of OL at provincial level (responding to RQ3)
4. Phase IV: Knowledge contribution of the study and implications – Conclusion (responding to RQ4).

The first phase of the research involves a study of the evolution of the public sector management. Through historical tracing and analysis of the current situation, the following transformations are evident: Over the years, the management practice seems to have moved from rule of law (British monarchy) to rule of the ruler/ powerful; from being a-political/ neutral to highly politicized; from being performance oriented to continuation oriented; from being empowered to being demoralized, and from rank/ status seeking to rent seeking.

An in-depth analysis of the case of OL is also carried out during Phase II. The case study indicates that the management practice (activity system) has evolved in several ways: For instance, the engagement with the official/ given object has considerably reduced; the disconnect between official and perceived object has intensified; new concepts (tools) such as ‘teacher on visa’ and ‘*parchi* system’, have emerged and been strengthened in the educational management, indicating the dominant direction of collective learning; the politicization of most of the organizational processes is more pervasive; and much stronger articulation of the ‘unwritten rules’ that promote lethargy, submission and compliance at work place and provide stronger justification for avoidance of responsibility and engagement with the organizational purpose is evident. Overall, the issue of power seems to have occupied most of the cognitive and action space in the District Education Offices (DEOs). Now, the primary attention of the district education managers is on managing the politics and power with the existing power centers as well as the emerging ones – now, a greater number of teachers is using political leverages.

During the third phase of the research, pattern seeking of OL at provincial level has been carried out. A number of data generation workshops have been conducted, where several innovative research tools have been administered, such as visual tools (images/ metaphors) and ‘Frequently Asked Questions - FAQs’ (for discourse analysis to identify e.g. organisational routines, roles and norms). These findings and analysis of organisational images, roles, discourse, and narratives, which helped in pattern seeking so as to explore the extent to which and the ways in which the emerging pattern reflects, resonate or refute the insights generated by the case study of the district education office in Sindh (Pakistan). The common insights and overlaps across the various data sets are quite evident.

The study shows that AT is a useful framework for organizational analysis in public sector because of its analytical power to explicate the current attentions within the cultural and historical context of their evolution. The analysis demonstrates how the management of school education is shaping and being shaped by norms of the professional community and the tools used by the district education offices. For example, follow the ‘rule of ruler’ rather than ‘rule of law’ is a historically

developed practice, which results from a complex interplay of tools, rules, norms and roles in the community of practice.

The findings indicate that though the system is replete with ‘structural contradictions’, yet it lacks the motivation for positive resolution of these contradictions (positive resolution, though, is a dominant expectation evident in the literature on Activity Theory). One of the key contradictions is the deep but ‘permissible’ disconnect of the motives of the public sector employees with the organizational (given or official) object/ purpose. The permissibility is granted through job security, lack of accountability and absence of any formidable requirements to perform. The only requirement seems to keep the boss happy in order to continue with personal plans (gains). This requirement of keeping the boss happy alludes to the underlying contextual notion of power residing within the person holding the position rather than in the position itself. On the contrary, the momentum of evolution currently evident in public sector organizations in Pakistan is towards further politicization, misuse of authority and strengthening networks of corruption. This shows how inherently contextual activities shape the content of collective learning and offer an explanation for why the context is relevant and important in collective learning. It is, thus, a study of organisational learning in the context of power and corruption.

The current study, I believe, has made some important knowledge contribution. *For instance*, the present study has used practice-based approach to address the negative consequences of ‘positive-outcome’ bias in the literature: Despite some references to organizational traps and defensive routines, OL Theory, by and large has remained associated with the learning as positive phenomenon. The theory has largely ignored or suppressed the kind of learning that could be seen as negative – such as learning corruption, inefficiency, rigidity or apathy (as in the case of the public education sector in Pakistan). Some researchers, such as Ortenblad (2011), have alluded that learning can be negative also, yet this kind of learning (which is negative) has not been analyzed rigorously. This is where the current study makes a significant contribution.

Another most significant contribution of the study is to have developed deeper insights about the power dynamics and its interlinkages with OL in the public sector of Pakistan – for instance, that power is linked to corruption learning and its implementation in the context of Pakistan. There are three major ways through which power mediates OL processes in the public sector: a) influencing the motives of the individual actions, b) allocating permissibility/ preferences to the choice and use of cultural artefacts, and c) guiding the interpretations of the situation. The public sector perpetuates and reproduces power culture in the broader context.

Third, the available OL literature considers context either as non-intervening or as an external factor influencing the OL. However, the present study contributes to the methodology of studying context and theorizing on the basis of the context (context as historical and social product as well as co-evolving with the activities).

Fourth, the existing literature has been quite weak in articulating the possibilities of a context/activity system which has high tolerance for contradictions. The contradictions, as the findings of the present study have revealed, could be left unresolved with an unarticulated consensus on part of the stakeholders, especially, in the context of high power difference,

Fifth, the existing literature indicates that objects are transformed and expanded (see expansive learning). However, the present study indicates that over the years, the given ‘object’ has, at least, not expanded; the public policy and other official documents indicate that the conceptualization of official object, in essence, has become rather narrow over the years, with the emphasis shifting from the educational purpose to administrative role.

Sixth, CHAT has generally been criticized for its lack of sufficient attention to the power issue within this theoretical framework. The present study has made contribution to the efficacy of the AT framework for power analysis by expanding the existing conceptualization of artefacts or tools as ‘a-political’ or ‘neutral’ to understanding the tools as ‘highly political’ in nature. The study has also contributed through highlighting the political nature of tools. *Moreover*, the addition of ‘compliance’ to the existing ‘kinds of interactions’ (coordination, cooperation and communication) identified by Engestrom (2000) is also a contribution of the study.

Furthermore, given the strong association of the activity theory with positive changes and collective development, the tools, by and large, are improvised, improved and/ or enriched. The disuse of tools or their complete abandonment has not received considerable attention.

Lastly, the present study claims some other contributions in the domain of research methods/tools e.g. the data generation workshops and use of a variety of tools for large scale data generation and in-depth (and multi-perspective) analysis for broader pattern seeking enriches the design of research and methodological choices.

Public sector schooling, in Pakistan, has been facing unprecedented pressure and criticism because of its inability to deliver. The district educational management, as a key player, is under huge pressure to reform and perform, demonstrate effective school management, and improve students’ learning outcomes. The present study would be helpful in designing any reform initiatives for public sector organizations, in general and DEO, in particular in Sindh/ Pakistan: For instance, the study highlights the need to understand the critical significance of developing/ enhancing ‘collective infrastructure of learning’ rather than almost an exclusive focus on individuals’ skills development. The findings of this study can be used by policy makers to develop appropriate policy provisions that could support/ gear management practice towards desired outcomes. The study has larger implications for such public organisations in developing countries in general and especially, the South Asian context.

Keywords: Organisational learning, public sector, developing country, activity theory, learning processes

SAMENVATTING

Belangstelling voor organisatorisch leren (OL) bestaat al decennia, maar die aandacht is de afgelopen jaren sterk toegenomen onder invloed van het toenemende belang van kennis en leren in organisaties. De relevantie van OL, zowel in wetenschappelijke als praktische zin, is daarom buiten kijf. Tegelijk moet geconstateerd worden dat een robuuste conceptuele basis ontbreekt in de bestaande OL theorie – of veeleer in de veelheid aan deels concurrerende OL theorieën. Dat geldt bij uitstek waar het organisatorisch leren in de publieke sector betreft. In het bijzonder vallen de volgende kennishiaten te constateren:

1. Een uitgewerkt procesbegrip van leren ontbreekt in OL theorieën.
2. De dialectiek tussen structurerende context en *agency* krijgt weinig tot geen aandacht in bestaande OL theorieën.
3. Begrip van de wijze waarop macht een bemiddelende rol speelt in leerprocessen is alleen schetsmatig in OL theorieën uitgewerkt.

Deze drie kennishiaten vragen om theoriegericht empirisch onderzoek waarmee begrip van de heterogene werkelijkheid van organisatorisch leren in de publieke sector vergroot kan worden. In de kennishiaten komt de noodzaak tot uiting om, in aanvulling op en ter correctie van de bestaande nadruk in OL theorieën op leerresultaten, tot een meer genuanceerd begrip te komen van OL processen (de eerste kenniskloof) uitgewerkt via de dialectiek tussen context en *agency* (de tweede kenniskloof) en via de wijze waarop macht het proces van het leren bemiddelt (de derde kenniskloof). Deze studie beoogt daarom de volgende centrale vraag te beantwoorden:

Hoe worden processen van organisatorisch leren in organisaties in de Pakistaanse publieke sector gevormd door de dialectische relaties tussen individuen en collectieven enerzijds en tussen structuren en *agency* anderzijds?

Om deze centrale vraag te beantwoorden stelt dit onderzoek de volgende deelvragen:

1. Hoe heeft de managementpraktijk zich ontwikkeld in de publieke sector van Pakistan? Wat is de cultuurhistorische context van deze sector, en hoe heeft die context invloed op de managementpraktijk in de onderwijssector?
2. Hoe heeft de praktijk inzake onderwijsmanagement zich ontwikkeld in een specifiek district in de Pakistaanse provincie Sindh?

3. Zijn de patronen inzake de managementpraktijk in dat district soortgelijk in andere districten in de provincie Sindh?
4. Welke implicaties heeft het antwoord op de voorgaande drie vragen voor de OL theorie, en hoe is dat antwoord relevant voor de verbetering van management van de onderwijspraktijk in soortgelijke situaties?

Om de onderzoeksvragen te beantwoorden wordt in dit onderzoek de cultuurhistorische activiteitentheorie – kortweg activiteitentheorie (AT) – als conceptueel hulpmiddel gebruikt. Deze theorie heeft zijn wortels in het werk van Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) en diens collega's Aleksandr Luria (1902-1977) en Aleksei Leontiev (1903-1979). De studie maakt gebruik van Engeström's model van AT (1987) als een theoretische en analytische lens. Dat model bestaat uit subject (een individu of groep), object, gereedschap, gemeenschap, regels en taakverdeling. Het 'subject' (actor) betreft de persoon of personen wier *agency* is gekozen als perspectief. Het 'object' (ook wel doel; in het Engels zowel *object* als *objective*) verwijst naar waar actoren mee bezig zijn en wat zij beogen te bereiken. 'Hulpmiddelen' of 'artefacten' verwijzen naar de conceptuele en fysieke instrumenten die het subject gebruikt in het nastreven van zijn/haar object. De 'gemeenschap' in de activiteit bestaat uit personen of groepen die hetzelfde object delen. 'Regels' verwijzen naar impliciete en expliciete normen en conventies die de relatie tussen de subjecten en hun gemeenschap regelen, terwijl 'taakverdeling' verwijst naar de verticale en horizontale verdeling van de rollen en verantwoordelijkheden van het subject en de gemeenschap.

AT, zoals ontwikkeld door Engeström (1987), is door diverse onderzoekers voor organisatieanalyse gebruikt. In dit onderzoek is de keuze van AT als raamwerk gebaseerd op een aantal methodologische en analytische voordelen. Het eerste voordeel betreft de keuze van activiteitensysteem als een analyse-eenheid dat ten minste doel, subject, mediërende artefacten, regels, gemeenschap en taakverdeling omvat. Ten tweede houdt het gebruik van AT in dat de context expliciet in het onderzoek wordt betrokken en een centrale rol speelt in het begrijpen van praktijken, hun doel, mediërende artefacten en sociale organisaties. Ten derde is een op AT gebaseerd methodologisch kader zowel systematisch (goed in het creëren van harde feiten) als uit zijn aard generatief en gebaseerd op het uitgangspunt dat mogelijk meerdere perspectieven relevant zijn om een fenomeen te begrijpen. Ten vierde wordt in een analyse op basis van een AT lens de dialectiek bloot gelegd tussen individu en organisatie, tussen handelen en denken, tussen productie (transformatie) en reproductie (continuïteit). De analyse is erop gericht recht te doen aan de belangrijke mediërende rol van instrumenten, normen, regels en rollen (taakverdeling). Dit is een belangrijk aspect in het blootleggen van de complexiteit van OL fenomenen.

Het onderzoek is uitgevoerd in een viertal opeenvolgende fasen; elk van die fasen komt overeen met een onderzoeksvraag:

1. Fase I: Een cultuurhistorische analyse van het activiteitensysteem (gericht op de beantwoording van onderzoeksvraag 1)
2. Fase II: Een diepteanalyse van de case study van OL in het activiteitensysteem (gericht op de beantwoording van onderzoeksvraag 2)
3. Fase III: Het detecteren van OL patronen op het niveau van de provincie Sindh (gericht op de beantwoording van onderzoeksvraag 3)
4. Fase IV: Specificatie van de bijdrage van de studie en van de – praktische en theoretische – implicaties ervan (gericht op de beantwoording van onderzoeksvraag 4).

De eerste fase van het onderzoek betrof een studie van de ontwikkeling van management in de Pakistaanse publieke sector. Historisch onderzoek en analyse van de huidige situatie hebben de volgende ontwikkelingen blootgelegd: In de loop der jaren blijkt management te zijn opgeschoven van praktijken die passen bij een rechtsstaat (Britse monocratie) naar een op macht gebaseerde wijze van regelen zoals een heerser dat doet; van politiek neutraal management naar sterk gepolitiseerde aansturing; van gerichtheid op prestaties naar gerichtheid op continuïteit en reproductie; van oriëntatie op *empowerment* naar gerichtheid op ontmoediging, en van een oriëntatie op rang en positie naar gerichtheid op behoud van positie.

In fase II is een diepte-analyse van OL uitgevoerd. De case studie laat zien dat management van de onderzochte praktijk (het management van publiek onderwijs in Pakistan opgevat als activiteitensysteem) zich op verschillende manieren heeft ontwikkeld. Zo is de betrokkenheid met het officiële object aanzienlijk verminderd; het verschil tussen het officiële object en het object waar men zich feitelijk mee bezighoudt is veel groter geworden; nieuwe concepten (instrumenten) zijn ontstaan en in omvang gegroeid, zoals ‘leraar op krediet’ (fietseren van afwezigheid op het werk met persoonlijke financiële tegenprestatie) en ‘parchi systeem’ (aanstelling op basis van politieke referentie). Dit is indicatief voor wat de dominante richting is bij collectief leren: politisering van organisatorische processen is alomtegenwoordig; de ongeschreven regels van lethargie, onderwerping en ‘je schikken naar je baas’ worden steeds prominenter en zorgen steeds meer voor een rechtvaardiging om verantwoordelijkheid voor en betrokkenheid bij organisatiedoelen te vermijden. Over het algemeen lijkt macht het grootste deel van de cognitieve en actieruimte te hebben ingenomen in de *District Education Offices* (DEO's). De aandacht van districtsonderwijsmanagers is momenteel primair gericht op management van politiek en macht met betrekking tot zowel bestaande als nieuw opkomende machtcentra. Hoe langer hoe meer leraren maken tegenwoordig gebruik van politieke hefbomen.

De derde fase van het onderzoek betrof een zoektocht naar OL patronen op provinciaal niveau. Een aantal workshops voor dataverzameling hebben plaatsgevonden, waarbij verschillende innovatieve onderzoekstools zijn gebruikt, zoals visuele hulpmiddelen (beelden, metaforen) en 'Frequently Asked Questions - FAQ' (ten behoeve van discours analyse om bijvoorbeeld organisatorische routines, rollen

en normen te identificeren). De resultaten van deze workshops en de analyse van de organisatorische beelden, rollen, discours, en verhalen – die emergente patroonherkenning faciliteerden – zijn gebruikt ter ondersteuning of weerlegging van de inzichten uit de case study van de district onderwijskantoor in Sindh (Pakistan). De datasets die in fase II en III zijn gegenereerd lieten vooral veel overeenkomsten zien.

De studie laat zien dat AT een nuttig kader is voor organisatieanalyse in de publieke sector. De reden daarvoor ligt in de analytische kracht van de AT lens om datgene zichtbaar te maken wat in het onderzochte fenomeen centraal aandacht krijgt tegen de achtergrond van de culturele en historische context waarin die aandacht zich ontwikkeld heeft. De analyse laat zien hoe onderwijsmanagement wordt gevormd door normen van de professionele gemeenschap en de instrumenten die worden gebruikt door de districts-onderwijskantoren. Bijvoorbeeld, het adagium om de ‘regel van de machthebber’ te volgen in plaats van de ‘regel van de wet’ is een historisch gegroeide praktijk, die het resultaat is van een complex samenspel van instrumenten, regels, normen en rollen in de betreffende praktijkgemeenschap.

De bevindingen laten zien dat, hoewel het systeem gekenmerkt wordt door een groot aantal structurele tegenstellingen, het ontbreekt aan de motivatie voor een positieve oplossing van deze tegenstellingen (het streven naar een positieve oplossing is evenwel een dominante verwachting in de literatuur aangaande de activiteitentheorie). Een van de belangrijkste tegenstellingen is de fundamentele, maar gefiatteerde loskoppeling van de motieven van de werknemers in de publieke sector van het organisatorische formele object (doel). Deze overwegend impliciete toestemming wordt verleend door middel van werkzekerheid, gebrek aan verantwoording en het ontbreken van prestatie-eisen waar ook maar enige druk van uit gaat. De enige vereiste lijkt te zijn de leidinggevende tevreden te stellen teneinde door te kunnen gaan met de eigen persoonlijke plannen. Deze eis van ‘je baas tevreden houden’ is gebaseerd op het onderliggende contextuele begrip van macht die is gelokaliseerd in de persoon die een bepaalde positie inneemt in plaats van in de positie zelf. De dynamiek in organisaties in de publieke sector in Pakistan gaat in de richting van verdere politisering, misbruik van gezag en het versterken van netwerken van corruptie. Dit laat zien hoe activiteiten die uit hun aard contextueel zijn, vorm geven aan het proces van collectief leren en duidelijk maken waarom de context relevant en belangrijk is in collectief leren. Wat de resultaten derhalve laten zien is dat dit onderzoek een studie is van organisatorisch leren in de context van macht en corruptie.

De studie levert een aantal belangrijke bijdragen aan de kennis over OL. Zo heeft het onderzoek via een *social-practice* benadering de beperkingen zichtbaar gemaakt van de dominante oriëntatie in de OL literatuur op leren als een proces dat uit zijn aard positieve uitkomsten voortbrengt. Er zijn in de OL literatuur wel verwijzingen te vinden naar organisatorische valkuilen en defensieve routines, maar in hoofdlijn wordt leren in die theorie als een positief verschijnsel benaderd. De theorie negeert of ontkent grotendeels het soort leren dat als negatief kan worden gezien - zoals het leren van corruptie,

inefficiëntie, starheid of apathie (zoals in het geval van het openbare onderwijs in Pakistan). Sommige onderzoekers, zoals Örtengren (2011), hebben erop gezinspeeld dat leren ook negatief kan zijn, maar voor dit negatieve soort leren is weinig systematische aandacht. Op dit terrein levert de huidige studie een belangrijke bijdrage.

Een andere belangrijke bijdrage van de studie is dat deze dieper inzicht heeft opgeleverd in de dynamische relaties tussen macht en OL in de publieke sector van Pakistan – bijvoorbeeld het inzicht dat macht samenhangt met het leren en in praktijk brengen van corruptie in de Pakistaanse context. Er zijn drie belangrijke manieren waarop macht OL processen in de publieke sector bemiddelt: macht a) beïnvloedt de motieven van individuele acties, b) bepaalt welke keuze en gebruik van culturele artefacten toelaatbaar worden geacht en de voorkeur verdienen, en c) stuurt de interpretatie van een situatie. De publieke sector bestendigt en reproduceert de machtscultuur in de bredere Pakistaanse context.

Ten derde besteedt de beschikbare OL literatuur ofwel geen expliciete aandacht aan de context of beschouwt deze als een externe factor. De studie draagt bij aan de methodologie om context te begrijpen en onderzoeken als historisch en sociaal product dat zich in nauwe samenhang met activiteiten ontwikkelt.

Ten vierde heeft de bestaande literatuur weinig oog voor het benoemen van contexten en activiteitensystemen die een hoge tolerantie voor tegenstrijdigheden tonen. Het is goed mogelijk, zo laat dit onderzoek zien, dat er een stilzwijgende consensus tussen belanghebbenden ontstaat om problemen onopgelost te laten, zeker als er sprake is van grote machtsafstand.

Ten vijfde geeft de bestaande literatuur aan dat objecten worden getransformeerd en uitgebreid (cf. expansief leren). Echter, deze studie laat zien dat in de onderzochte thematiek het gegeven 'object' door de jaren heen in ieder geval niet is gegroeid; het formele overheidsbeleid en andere officiële documenten wijzen erop dat de betekenisverlening ten aanzien van het officiële object in wezen door de jaren heen steeds tot verenging geleid heeft, waarbij de nadruk is verschoven van het onderwijskundige doel naar de administratieve rol van betrokkenen.

Ten zesde wordt AT breed bekritiseerd vanwege gebrek aan aandacht voor machtsvraagstukken. Deze studie levert een bijdrage aan de bruikbaarheid van AT voor machtsanalyse door de bestaande conceptualisatie van artefacten en gereedschappen uit te breiden van politiek neutraal tot instrumenten met een nadrukkelijk politiek karakter. Een bijdrage van de studie ligt ook in het benadrukken van de noodzaak om expliciet aandacht te besteden aan de politieke aard van gebruikte gereedschappen. Bovendien is aan de drie soorten interacties die AT op basis van Engeström (2000) nu identificeert (namelijk coördinatie, samenwerking en communicatie) een vierde soort toegevoegd, namelijk die van *compliance*, ofwel inschikkelijkheid en onderwerping.

Bovendien, in lijn met de sterke associatie van de activiteitentheorie met positieve veranderingen en collectieve ontwikkeling, ligt in het huidige gebruik van deze theorie de nadruk wat

instrumenten betreft hoofdzakelijk op aspecten van het feitelijke gebruik ervan zoals improvisatie, verbetering en verrijking. Het niet gebruiken van gereedschap of het volledige negeren ervan heeft niet veel aandacht gekregen. Ook de expliciete aandacht voor dit (negatieve) aspect van inzet van instrumenten is een bijdrage van deze studie.

Ten slotte levert deze studie een aantal andere bijdragen op het gebied van onderzoeksmethoden en -technieken, waaronder de gegevensverzamelingsworkshops, het gebruik van een breed scala aan tools voor grootschalige dataverzameling en de gedetailleerde, multi-perspectief analyse voor het herkennen van OL patronen.

De openbaar onderwijssector in Pakistan staat momenteel bloot aan ongekennde druk en kritiek vanwege zijn onvermogen om kwalitatief goed onderwijs te leveren. Het onderwijsmanagement op districts niveau, dat een belangrijke speler is in deze, staat onder grote druk om te hervormen en presteren, teneinde zowel effectieve schoolleiding te realiseren als tot een verbetering te komen van leerresultaten van leerlingen. Deze studie kan bijdragen aan een hervorming van organisaties in de publieke sector in het algemeen en van districtskantoren in het onderwijs in Sindh, Pakistan, in het bijzonder. Bijvoorbeeld, de studie laat de noodzaak zien van het ontwikkelen van inzicht in en het verbeteren van de collectieve infrastructuur van leren in plaats van de huidige bijna exclusieve focus op individuele ontwikkeling van vaardigheden. De uitkomsten van dit onderzoek kunnen worden gebruikt door beleidsmakers in de publieke sector om passend beleid te ontwerpen. Voor organisaties in deze sector zijn de uitkomsten van deze studie met name relevant in ontwikkelingslanden in het algemeen en in de Zuid-Aziatische context in het bijzonder.

Steekwoorden: Organisatorisch leren, publieke sector, ontwikkelingsland, activiteitentheorie, leerprocessen

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He has to his credit more than 20 years of extensive and rich experience of working in the field of social sciences and development sector in/ with public and private sector at national, regional and international level. He has worked in both, urban and rural contexts – with top leadership (ministries and government officials) to the grassroots level (including teachers, students and local community).

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